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“Evil Isn’t Born, It’s Made”: As Communicated in *Once Upon A Time*

By

Ellie Hodapp

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Bellarmino University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Communication

May 2016

BELLARMINE UNIVERSITY

The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

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Abstract

In the television series *Once Upon A Time*, evil is portrayed as a circumstance rather than a character trait. Characters shift toward and away from evil; the evil character suddenly shows redeeming qualities and the good character becomes consumed with revenge. This unusual approach to depicting evil in a television adaptation centering upon fairy tales rejects the clear distinction between good and evil typically present in the written stories. A close reading of Regina and Snow's narratives and rhetorical analysis of visuals in the show reveal good and evil as fluid concepts – developing and shifting within and between characters.

Keywords: fairy tales, Once Upon A Time, evil, transformations, narrative, visual rhetoric, textual analysis.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support from several people. First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my thesis advisor, Moira O'Keeffe, Ph.D. Her valuable feedback, guidance, and challenging questions pushed me to become a better student of communication and a better writer. Thank you, Moira, for your dedication and encouragement throughout this experience. To my thesis committee, Ruth Wagoner, Ph.D. and Kyle Barnett, Ph.D., Thank you! I am indebted to you for sharing your expertise, insightful comments, constructive feedback, and for your support over the past year. Additionally, I would like to thank the professors in the School of Communication, especially Kimberly Parker, Ph.D., for piquing and fostering my curiosity in the field of communication.

I am appreciative to my friends for their ongoing support and encouragement over the past year while I worked on this thesis.

I am grateful for the support from my family, siblings, and parents. Thank you to my sister for all of your help! I am especially thankful to my mom, not only for introducing me to the world of fairy tales, particularly ones with strong female characters, but for teaching me to continually question and think critically. Thank you for instilling a thirst for knowledge in me and for demonstrating what it means to be a life long learner.

Lastly, I cannot find the words to express my gratitude for my life partner, who was a source of energy and encouragement when I needed it the most. From the bottom of my heart, I appreciate you and I thank you!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“These stories are classics. There’s a reason we all know them. They’re a way for us to deal with our world. A world that doesn’t always make sense.” (Snow, *Pilot*, 2011)

This study examines the portrayal of evil in a primetime television series, specifically, the transformations of evil in characters as revealed through a close reading of narratives and rhetorical analysis of visuals on the series *Once Upon A Time* (Kitsis & Horowitz, 2011-present). Narratives, or stories, are ubiquitous. We are surrounded by stories in our daily lives, especially when consuming television. Stories are essential to being human; in fact, one might say stories are what make us human (Fisher, 1985; Wright, 2000). As children, we are exposed to stories of all varieties. One of the most common types of stories is the fairy tale. Fairy tales become part of our experiences of the world through story time and through books, film, and television. Fairy tales were originally communicated through oral storytelling (Cashdan, 1999; Zipes, 2002) and were primarily told during leisure time by and to adults. Fairy tales are told, retold, and revised in an ever-changing environment (Cashdan, 1999; Zipes, 2011). Fairy tales remain popular and relevant due to a universal quality within the stories that resonate in people’s lives (Haase, 1993; Bottigheimer, 2009).

The television series *Once Upon A Time* (*OUAT*) is an example of fairy tale adaptation. Despite changes to the tales, one can recognize not only the plots of commonly known fairy tales, but also the characters. These recognizable characters include villains like the Evil Queen from *Snow White*. Fairy tales, both as adaptations and products, are not only based on the culture or era in which they are told (Cashdan, 1999) but are adapted through different forms of media. Fairy tales are as relevant today as they were when originally told or recorded due to the

common underlying dynamic - the struggle between good and evil - that resonates across media (Cashdan, 1999). The evolution and adaptability of the stories in culture and media make fairy tales an important area to study.

Stories, as a part of culture, have a dependent relationship with the culture in which they are told. Stories can play a role in shaping or maintaining culture by serving as ways to examine and understand life. Culture influences the content of the stories and how they are told. Fairy tales, as some of the first stories we hear, typically offer ways of dealing with struggles in our lives. The most common struggle depicted in the stories is between positive and negative forces often termed as good and evil (Cashdan, 1999). The role fairy tales play in the lives of children and adults “strengthens us in the belief that we are dealing with a peculiar form of literature, one which concerns man directly” (Lüthi, 1976, p. 22). The ways to deal with certain struggles are then taken from the stories and applied to life. This profound influence on how we interpret, understand, and handle experiences of life demonstrates the power of stories on humans.

Narratives, including fairy tales, are typically used in making sense of the world, uncovering inner truths, promoting certain agendas, and for criticizing people. Narrative then serves as a mental structure in order to organize those experiences (Larsen, 2002). Stories, used as sense making tools, typically include a struggle between good and evil because human nature is both good and evil (Perrett, 2002). Evil has also been described as a social construct, and not something that is natural (Norden, 2000), which contrasts with Perrett.

“Our recognition of evil proves, over time, to be extremely flexible and open to socialization. Our understanding of evil is always enculturated, informed by and inscribed across of panoply of texts continuously in circulation around us” (Turnau, 2004, p. 384). Although Perrett describes evil as part of human nature, our recognition and understanding of evil is

constructed by culture. So, the representation of evil must always include good because “one necessitates the other” (Petersen, 2008, p. 97).

All fairy tales follow similar narratives and provide familiar scenes, settings, and themes (Propp, 1968; Swann Jones, 1983). *OUAT* uses the repeated exposure and structure of fairy tales while also surprising the viewer with new or altered narratives as well as the creation of new settings and realms. Fairy tales, though, are often judged according to realistic standards. This way of understanding turns use of magic or magical objects into symbols for experiences or events that could possibly happen in reality (Joosen, 2007). People use and are shaped by the understandings they develop from repeated exposure to specific stories as well as from other aspects of their culture when interpreting and making sense of their own lives (Bhatia, 2011). Both fairy tales and television narratives, as part of culture, are important to examine for that reason.

Shafer and Raney (2012) concluded that “repeated exposure to stories from the same genre teaches us how narratives, scenes, and setting are constructed, how fictional causes are related to fictional effects, [and] how themes and archetypes are recycled, among other things” (p. 1031). Fairy tales, for many, are present when growing up so those narratives, scenes, setting and characters from the repeated exposure allows the producers of *OUAT* to tell stories that are almost immediately recognized by viewers. There are dozens of versions and sometimes hundreds of modifications to well-known fairy tales (Tatar, 2003). *OUAT* and other adaptations prove that to be true. Each storyteller, whether told through film or television or from memory, modifies a story in order to interest, engage or be relatable to an audience.

Even with those modifications, both the original tales and the retellings often contain elements of historical realities or cultural beliefs. Although historical realities or cultural beliefs

are included, the actions or settings are often depicted as fantastic or surreal (Tatar, 2003). Thus, fairy tales can be viewed as historical documents that provide a window of what life was like during the time the stories were first told, despite the story not being a realistic depiction of life (Cashdan, 1999). If the original stories can be taken as some form of documenting history, the same thinking can be applied to the retellings and adaptations of fairy tales in a different medium, like television.

Fairy tales consistently introduce us to multiple characters and narratives demonstrating battles between good and evil, much like television series. The battles depicted tend to reveal truths about people and oneself (Bettelheim, 1976). The majority of characters in fairy tales are either good or evil with no in between. This is not the case with how people are in real life (Bettelheim, 1976); people are layered and complex. The depiction of good and evil characters as absolute is due in part to fairy tales simplifying all situations including the struggle between good and evil, as well as needing to simplify ways to combat or address those similar situations in real life. We learn about the characters from their actions (Larsen, 2002) and once we are familiar with a character, we can either relate to their narratives and their struggles or not.

As previously mentioned, narratives often include a struggle between positive and negative forces, or good and evil. As Norden (2000) points out, “evil as a general subject has long been an area of inquiry for theologians, sociologists, and anthropologists,” yet the subject of evil “has attracted relatively little in-depth writing from film/television scholars” (p. 51). Despite the interest in other fields, there is limited analysis on how evil functions in television narratives. Evil is understudied in media, which is unusual because of the extensive existing research on other topics, such as stereotypes, violence, and gender. As stories are modified or adapted, novel ways of presenting characters and behaviors can occur. *OUAT* portrays evil in a

way that is unique to how the written fairy tales depict evil. Good and evil are no longer absolutes; evil is transformative and shifts within and between the characters.

Like in fairy tales, television meanings are not confined to television but are cultural and used to make sense of experiences (Fiske, 1985). Television serves as a mirror to the outside world and encourages the telling of stories, including already recognized fairy tales. *OUAT* presents an opportunity to examine evil in the context of fairy tales as depicted on television. This opportunity is through modifications in the retelling of well-known fairy tales. The changes to the tales include but are not limited to: expanding the characters' histories and showing complex character development, both visually and implied. This brings a relatable human quality to the otherwise fictional, magical stories. The retellings of fairy tales also demonstrate new ways of handling or understanding a struggle that is ever present in reality for viewers. When written fairy tales incorporate a battle of good and evil, which is a basic motif of human existence and narratives, it is important that good and evil are simplified (Lüthi, 1976), which is not the case in *OUAT*, where good and evil are presented as entangled and complex.

The fairy tale is a topic continually of interest to scholars in multiple fields including anthropology, sociology, communication, and psychology. Despite the interest from many fields, disagreement among scholars about the definitions of folklore and fairy tales (Utley, 1958) as well as the stories' origins (Lüthi, 1982) is common. There are several types of tales and it is important to note the differences, especially when looking to examine a particular type. In order to classify the genre, several commonly accepted definitions will be described below, although there will be differences based on professional bias and experiences of the scholar (Clarke & Clarke, 1963).

According to some scholars, folk tales differ from fairy tales in their structure, characters, and plot, but the terms folk tale and fairy tale are sometimes used interchangeably (Utle, 1958). To some scholars, folk tales lack the dimension of depth not only in portrayals of characters or environment but also in time (Lüthi, 1982), meaning there is no sense of time in the tales, only that an event occurred at some vague point in time. Conversely, some scholars believe fairy tales show depth in the timing presented in the story.

Another type of tale is commonly known by several names including fairy tale, magic tale, or *Märchen*. Magic tales are defined as including magic, although “magic exists across a broad spectrum of tales, some of which are fairy tales and many of which are not” (Bottigheimer, 2009, p.5). *Märchen* simply means fairy tale in the German language, but the literal translation to English is “little tale” or “brief story”, and fairy tales are neither little nor brief. Folk tales and fairy tales are stories with extreme contrasts, especially in regard to the depiction of good and evil where “characters are completely beautiful and good or completely ugly and bad” (Lüthi, 1982, p. 35; Lüthi, 1976).

According to Clarke & Clarke (1963), *Märchen* refers to a story “involving wonders, lowly heroes who win fame and fortune in an unreal world of improbable characters and creatures. Magic, transformations, ogres, and quests abound in these tales” (p. 21-22). The term fairy tale for some scholars only refers to European folk tales that “deal with the little people of the supernatural world...fairies, elves, gnomes, dwarfs, or leprechauns” (p. 23). These characters are able to perform and possess magic while also supporting the hero of the story.

Another type of tale is the legend. Legends are “narratives about persons, places, or events involving real or pretended belief” (Clarke & Clarke, 1963, p. 24). A fable is “a short tale, usually involving animal characters, which expresses, either implicitly or explicitly, a moral

principle” (p. 25). In addition to legends and fables, there are myths. A myth is a narrative “dealing with gods, demigods, or culture heroes. The myth is concerned with the creation of the world, the establishment of the present order, the origins of a people, tribe or cultural trait” (p. 26). For this research, the following compilation definition will be used in reference to fairy tales: A fairy tale is a story involving magic in a fantastic setting while describing a journey to defeat darkness and ending in happiness.

Once Upon A Time (OUAT) is an American fairy tale drama television series, produced by Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz, on American Broadcasting Company, ABC (2011 – present). The show is about the lives of fairy tale characters in different realms. Fairy Tale Land is “filled with magic, monsters and all of the characters we all know from stories growing up. It's real, and so are the people in it. But unlike the ‘happily ever after’ you may have heard about, their stories continued, and The Evil Queen cast a Dark Curse over the land” (About the Show, n.d.).

Another world depicted is the town of Storybrooke. “It's a quiet, little, New England town filled with people who go about their everyday lives with no idea who they really are. The Queen's Curse has trapped them here and placed her in near-complete control. They have no real memories and no real hope” (About the Show, n.d.). The first season of *OUAT* is about the hope of breaking Evil Queen’s dark curse, and subsequent seasons continue to emphasize hope as new dangers, magic, and realms constantly emerge.

There has been a resurgence of fairy tales in popular culture, with *OUAT* being only one of the new popular adaptations. Films like *Snow White and the Huntsman* (Sanders, 2012) prove that fairy tales are not limited to children’s books; these films revive one of the original purposes – for adults to occupy and entertain themselves during leisure time. In fact, many of the

television and film adaptations are aimed toward an older audience who has a recollection of the tales they grew up hearing. The retellings include darker, more violent content as well adult themes, such as infidelity. The darker versions of the tales can be traced back before the revisions in animated films from Disney. The previous literary versions of *Snow White* or *Little Red Riding Hood* included adult content like sexual themes and even cannibalism.

OUAT is not the only television series based on or adapted from fairy tales. Another television show, *Grimm* (Carpenter, S., Greenwalt, D. & Kouf, J., 2011 – present), is similar to *OUAT*, due to its classification as "a drama series inspired by the classic Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales" (About, n.d.). *OUAT* is a television series solely focused on fairy tale characters with their stories occurring in multiple realms. Close readings of a television series and the characters' narratives are important because television series are thought to be significant carriers of cultural values and insights (Larsen, 2002). This thesis examines how the transformation of evil is portrayed within and between characters to uncover cultural values and insights on how evil is communicated. In order to contribute an informed and detailed analysis of evil as communicated in *OUAT*, a review of related literature is critical. The next chapter is the review of relevant literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will summarize the literature relevant to an examination of evil on the television series *Once Upon A Time (OUAT)*. On this show, evil can be viewed as a circumstance rather than a character description. Evil is communicated through a character's selfishness and use of power over others. Because evil is portrayed as circumstance instead of a character descriptor, evil becomes transformative and fluid in the characters themselves. Characters are able to shift towards and away from evil; the easily identifiable *evil* character suddenly shows redeeming qualities and the *good* character becomes consumed with revenge. As noted in the previous chapter, this is an unusual approach to evil, especially in a television adaptation centering upon well-known fairy tales. In order to provide a detailed examination of this inventive approach to evil in *OUAT*, it is necessary to explore literature related to narrative and popular culture. The next section details several approaches to the analysis of narrative.

Analysis of Narrative

This section will detail the literature pertaining to narrative analysis, specifically structuralism and the narrative paradigm. Structuralism contributes methods for examination of meanings found in the structure of a narrative. The narrative paradigm considers people as storytellers who participate, read, and evaluate texts of literature and ultimately, life. People are "full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors)" (Fisher, 1985, p. 86). Narratives have been around as long as humans could communicate. Originating with oral storytelling, stories have transitioned to literature and evolved in other media, like film or television. Narratives are viewed as the "means of articulating the profound and uncertain relationship of the individual with the social" (Fiske,

1987, p. 138). Because of the social component of storytelling, cultural meanings are expressed in narratives by the creators or authors of the tales and understood by the consumers. Although I am looking to literature on structuralism, I acknowledge that the meanings of stories as well as the ways they are interpreted are not stable or universal. The meanings of stories can and do change with a culture or language because it is the audience that serves as a maker of meaning.

With that acknowledgement, the examination and analysis of narrative structure is a useful method to determine meaning. The next section will detail literature regarding structuralism, which is an area of narrative analysis popularized by Lévi-Strauss and Propp.

Structuralism.

This section focuses on structuralism, including its definition and known scholars of this method of narrative analysis. Herman (2007) noted, “one of the first projects of structuralist narratology was the attempt to create a systematic framework for describing how characters participate in the narrated action” (p. 193). Narrative structuralist theories identify the laws that direct the organizational basis for the story, rather than determining if the story is an accurate representation of reality (Fiske, 1987). This means the structure and linear movement of the story is more important to structuralists rather than the if the story is able to accurately reflect or depict real life.

Fiske (1987) detailed approaches by Lévi-Strauss and Barthes that insist stories are a part of a “universal cultural process and that the deeper ‘truer’ meanings of myths are not immediately apparent but can only be revealed by theoretical analysis” (p. 131). This sentiment led to the development of methods to uncover layers of meaning in the structure of narrative. “Structurally, narrative belongs with the sentence without ever being reducible to the sum of its sentences: a narrative is a large sentence,” wrote Barthes (1975, p. 241), referring to the fact that

the details of the story are irrelevant when compared to the organizational structure. Meaning, for structuralists, is revealed through the structure of the narrative, not the details or culture.

For Lévi-Strauss, myth became a mechanism to reduce concern when dealing with “unresolvable contradictions in a culture and provides imaginative ways of living with them” (Fiske, 1987, p.132). Those unresolvable contradictions are expressed in terms of binary oppositions and form the structure of several types of stories. Binary oppositions include abstract generalizations expressed as good and evil or nature and culture, for example. Stories work metaphorically to transform the unresolvable contradictions into real representations. This structure of meaning in myths is grasped when the characters and setting are removed (Fiske, 1987).

Myth, like language, is made up of basic units. These units, when analyzed on different levels, reveal a complex order of form and function compared to the units that make up language (Lévi-Strauss, 1955). In order to define myth, it is best to include all versions of a story. Through structural analysis, “it becomes possible to organize all the known variants of a myth as a series forming a kind of permutation group, the two variants placed at the far-ends being in a symmetrical, though inverted relationship to each other” (Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p. 439).

The method of analysis used by Lévi-Strauss brings order to the narrative’s structure by uncovering the underlying functions of myth, which then enables us to see the basic logical processes that are at the root of myth. The structure of myth is identifiable through repetition, thus making repetition a function (Lévi-Strauss, 1955). According to Lévi-Strauss (1955), the purpose “of the myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction, a theoretically infinite number of slates [layers to the story] will be generated, each one slightly different from the others” (p. 443). Slates are the layers of the story’s structure revealing its

function. Implying that the story unfolds layer by layer when its structure is revealed through repetition.

Lévi-Strauss, through his method of structural analysis, uncovered that the logic used by “mythical thought is as rigorous as that of modern science, and that the difference lies not in the quality of the intellectual process, but in the nature of the things to which it is applied” (1955, p. 444). Lévi-Strauss was not the only scholar focused on how meanings are revealed through structure. Incorporating a functional approach is a useful addition to Lévi-Strauss’ brand of structuralism.

For structuralists, function refers to the actions of the character significant to progress the story. According to Barthes (1975), “a narrative is made up solely of functions: everything, in one way or another, is significant” (p. 244). Girardot (1977) elaborates that, “the functional aspect of the overall narrative form is most important in getting at the possible meaning or layers of meaning” (p. 284). Another method of analysis was developed in order to identify functions to uncover the possible meanings.

A scholar who identified a method of analysis specific to narrative function is Propp. Propp (1968) examined folktales, a term he often applied to fairy tales. Propp was able to identify a method of analysis for fairy tales based on the characters’ actions in the narrative. Through his analysis of folktales, Propp noted several recurring functions in every story. Because a story assigns identifiable actions to its characters, it is then possible to study the tale according to its characters’ actions. The functions identified by Propp always appear in the same order, although not every tale will have every function, despite the function serving to advance the narrative.

“Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” (Propp, 1968, p. 21). These functions become stable, constant elements in a tale, regardless of who performs them or how. Propp (1968) identified thirty-two functions known to the fairy tale. Through the thirty-two functions, Propp discovered “all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure” (1968, p. 23). Because of this one structure of fairy tales, it is possible to analyze other stories based on its functions. Within the thirty-two functions identified by Propp, the actions of the hero and villain are fundamental and clear contributors to the movement of the story. There are eight functions of the thirty-two attributed to the villain’s actions that always result in the defeat and punishment of the villain.

“The struggle between the hero and villain is a metaphorical transformation of that between the forces of order and those of disorder, good and evil, or culture and nature” (Fiske, 1987, p. 138). This battle between good and evil or negative and positive is central to all societies. Narratives look at the role of human and social agents in the struggle between good and evil. Another contribution from Propp was the attention to the motivations of the character identified through the tale. By motivations, Propp refers to “both the reasons and aims of personages which cause them to commit various acts” (1968, p. 75). Although motivations are part of the tale, they are also some of the unstable elements when compared to the fundamental and stable functions. “Motivations often add to a tale a completely distinctive, vivid coloring” (Propp, 1968, p.75), while the characters of hero and villain and their functions are essential to depicting the struggles of society through their actions. Some structuralists choose to focus on the character itself instead of motivations in analysis.

Structuralism focuses “on the mode and means of representation” (Fiske, 1987, p. 154) and according to some structuralists, a character can be viewed as a textual device created by

discourse. With a shift from literature to television, the physical presence of the character is used to embody the discourse and ideology of the storyteller (television producers and writers). The characters then lend themselves to the visual depiction of certain contradictions and struggles much like our own social experiences and reality. Viewers can see a struggle or consequence of an action play out by the characters on the screen or in a text and understand how and why something occurs.

Fiske (1987) reiterates that according to structuralism's position on characters, "a character cannot be understood as an individual existing in his or her own right, but only as a series of textual and intertextual relations" (p. 154). The most common of these textual and intertextual relations is the relationship with other characters. Characters, like the hero and villain, serve to depict those textual relationships through their relationship. Without a villain or opposing force, there would not be a need for a hero and vice versa. Another form of narrative analysis examines the role of humans, not the functions and motivations of the characters, in relation to stories.

Narrative paradigm.

In the narrative paradigm, people are storytellers whose "values, emotions, and aesthetic considerations ground our beliefs and behaviors" (West & Turner, 2014, p. 355). Narration, as understood by Fisher (1989) refers to "individuated forms such as depiction, anecdote, and characterization," "generic forms such as argumentation and narration," and "a conceptual framework, like dramatism, for understanding human decision, discourse, and action" (p. 55). The narrative paradigm is an approach used for understanding communication since "we experience the world as filled with stories" (West & Turner, 2014, p. 357).

The role of the character can hold significance to the meanings in a story. Herman

(2007) stated, “roles in narrative are constellations of structural, semantic, cognitive, and pragmatic factors” (p. 202). The actions and roles of the characters portrayed in stories serve as ways to communicate meaning. This is because narrative and language are main cultural processes shared by all societies, as they serve as basic ways of making sense of our experiences of the real (Fiske, 1987; Fisher, 1984; Barthes, 1975). In addition to giving us tools to understand own experiences, narratives help us understand the actions of others (Fisher, 1984). This is because Fisher’s perspective assumes “the world is a set of stories, and as we choose among them, we experience life differently” (West & Turner, 2014, p. 360). Fiske (1987) suggests narrative as a fundamental cultural process. Narratives are not only useful in reality, they can serve as tools for sense making when consuming media.

Fisher supported the notion that the narrative perspective is relevant not only to real but fictive worlds as well. The narrative paradigm is a blend of “two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme” (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). Through the narrative paradigm, human communication is viewed not only as historical but situational and rational as well. Essentially, the narrative paradigm is founded on the thought that humans are storytellers (Fisher, 1984) and stories vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media. West and Turner (2014) note Fisher believed “narrative is universal – found in all cultures and time periods” (p. 358).

In determining how people look to stories to guide their behavior, there are several approaches. “Structuralism approaches narrative formally; the narrative [paradigm] approaches it, along with other genres, rhetorically, as a mode of social influence” (Fisher, 1985, p. 351). Through the narrative paradigm, Fisher views stories as methods of influencing behaviors and beliefs. According to Fisher, the function of the narrative paradigm offers a “way of interpreting

and assessing human communication that leads to critique, a determination of whether or not given instance of discourse provides a reliable, trustworthy, and desirable guide to thought and action in the world” (1985, p. 351).

“Narrative theory which is derived from folk tale, with its emphasis on common structures and conventions that relate directly to its social context, would seem more pertinent to a popular medium like television”, with simple, repeated structures appealing to a heterogeneous audience with differing histories and experiences (Fiske, 1987, p. 138). With this primary function, Fisher asserts that with the narrative paradigm normal human discourse is meaningful and is subject to the tests of narrative rationality, which contrasts with structuralism.

Meanings do not just come from functions or structure; Fisher views meaning as a “matter of history, culture, and character” (Fisher, 1985, p. 351). The goal of the narrative paradigm is to help determine how persons came to believe and how they came to behave. It offers an “approach to assessment and interpretation of human communication - assuming that all forms of human communication can be seen fundamentally as stories, as interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture and character” (Fisher, 1989, p. 57).

Narrative discourse and analysis are crucial to uncovering insights of a culture and the meanings behind why a story is structured a certain way or to the significance of the characters within a story. Fairy tales are popular subjects of narrative analysis both structurally and paradigmatically because the structure of fairy tales remains consistent across different cultures, continents, and languages. The next section will include relevant literature on popular culture with sub-sections centered on fairy tales and television studies.

Popular Culture

This section will discuss literature concerning popular culture in regard to media, more specifically television and fairy tales. Examination of relevant literature is important to understanding how evil is presented in media, especially with evil being a key element of both human nature and culture. Within this section, the portrayal of evil in popular culture, literature pertaining to fairy tales, the role of villains in fairy tales, television and media studies, and villains in media will be discussed. Fairy tales and television are very much tuned to popular culture and to how aspects of culture are informed and consumed. “What we call culture can be seen as a collection of codes that tell us to what to eat, how to dress, and how to relate to others” (Berger, 2010, p. 23). Television shows and fairy tales are constructed with codes informing behaviors, beliefs and providing tools for sense making, whether the stories are written or depicted visually.

Turnau (2004), who studied popular culture and the perception of evil as portrayed in television shows and books, stated “when we spot evil, it is always by means of a mediated gaze, as through a reflecting telescope – a refracted, inflected image” (p. 384). Authors, especially television producers and writers, can affect a viewer’s sense of self, his or her relation to the world, and more specifically, how evil is or should be recognized through the portrayals (Turnau, 2004).

Before examining evil as depicted in media, it is critical to discuss some of the definitions of evil. Evil is often understood to be a unique moral category, one that involves not just wrongdoing, but intentional wrongdoing (Perrett, 2002). According to Perrett (2002), intentional wrongdoing in reality comes from a particular type of person, one who is motivated, enacts the wrongdoing because it is wrong, takes pleasure from wrongness of the action, and does not

exhibit any reactions like guilt, shame or regret. In relation to dualism (the idea or belief that everything has two opposite parts), evil is normally best explained by a human's propensities to pursue their own interests and desires at the expense of others and override their natural propensities to do good (Perrett, 2002). This is an important view to consider in the analysis of the behaviors of fictional evil characters in television as well. Perrett concluded the dualist theory "allows for both selfish and genuinely altruistic actions, since human nature is taken to be both good and evil. Every good action has to explain why the agent's natural propensity to do evil did not triumph" (p. 311).

According to Alford's definition of evil, which is different from Perrett's, "evil is an experience of dread" (1997, p. 3). In an attempt to understand how people experience evil, Alford examined study participants' examples of evil. From the study's examples, Alford described acting evil as taking dread and inflicting it on to others by hurting them, thus "doing evil is an attempt to transform the terrible passivity and helplessness of suffering into activity" (Alford, 1997, p. 3). Alford elaborated that evil is a "discourse about human malevolence, suffering, and loss: why humans are the way they are, and why we live in a world that is this way. Evil is not a residual category but a foundational one" (Alford, 1997, p. 15).

Applications of both Perrett's and Alford's findings and definitions will be used in this thesis when examining the behaviors of characters' actions on a television series. Although their definitions stem from reality, the definitions may be applied to fictional characters, similar to Fisher's reasoning for narrative being used for fictional purposes and real life. The definitions of evil and actions of evil reveal meaning for those who create it (television writers and producers) and interpret it (audience). Evil portrayed on television contributes to an attempt to better understand or create meanings of the social experiences depicted on a series.

However, Alford (1997) worries that the portrayals of evil in popular media such as television can have more influence. The way that evil is portrayed in popular media, through "symbolic language," results in what Alford calls "imitations of evil" and these imitations start to "desensitize us to evil" (Alford, 1997, p. 13). Authors should recognize the possible effects of their depictions on television, when television is used as a tool for sense making— the audience's desensitization to evil. Alford sought to explain evil and concluded, "evil is the attempt to inflict our dread on others. Evil is the presentiment of something, which is nothing. Evil is a refusal to submit to the conditions of being human" (1997, p. 119).

Just as narratives are a part of being human, so is evil. Evil and its definitions are created, maintained, or changed in discourse as well as through its depictions in media and narrative. Thus, an important aspect of culture is narrative, specifically the type of stories that help individuals make sense of the world. Popular culture shapes stories and may dictate how stories are told or shared. The stories consumed by audiences then influence the level of popularity in a culture. Humans have been and will continue to be storytellers, especially with narratives holding an important role for humans and culture. Stories help guide our actions and provide tools for interpreting the world as well as the social experiences around us. Fairy tales are some of those stories that continue to be told, revised, and adapted to the world and experiences of the time. The next section will look at previous research on fairy tales and the source of evil in fairy tales.

Fairy tales.

This section will describe the origins, significance, and importance of fairy tales based on previous literature as well as the study of evil or villains in fairy tales. This section also includes summaries of the two well-known versions of the fairy tale *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Stone (1981) noted that magic tales, in scholarly terms, are called *Märchen* or fairy tales.

Bottigheimer (1987) elaborated by stating “structurally, fairy and folk tales (*Märchen*) are distinct from legends (*Sagen*)...Fairy and folk tales require elaborated narrative development, while the emphasis on the uniqueness of an event, which defines legends, necessitates a simpler narrative structure” (p. 9).

Fairy tales are modified by the cultural setting in which they are told and retold (Cashdan, 1999; Tatar, 2003; Zipes, 2011) in order to survive and remain relevant. Tatar (2003) described the opening paragraphs as the only part of a fairy tale that might suggest reality and human life, but once the story progresses, the readers find the characters in “in a world of inner realities” (p. 155). Bettelheim argued the fairy tale only “views the world and what happens in it not objectively, but from the perspective of the hero, who is always a person in development” (1976, p. 203).

Fairy tales can serve as historical documents of sort, providing a glimpse into what life was possibly like or what was culturally important (Cashdan, 1999) at the time the stories are told. Fairy tales are often the first stories we hear and, though entertaining, the stories offer strategies for addressing common psychological conflicts (Cashdan, 1999). Fairy tales were not initially meant for children. Originally, fairy tales were forms of adult entertainment to fill leisure time told at social gatherings or in spinning rooms. With this origin as adult entertainment, it was common for fairy tales to include adult themes such as exhibitionism and rape (Thompson, 1955; von Franz, 1987; Cashdan, 1999).

Fairy tales began appearing as children’s stories in the 19th century with the German Grimm Brothers versions of the tales as most popular. The Grimms never wrote any of the stories; they simply compiled the tales that had been known throughout Europe from friends and

relatives (Cashdan, 1999). As such, fairy tales are further altered and changed when translated from one language to another. Some folklorists believe fairy tales were used to teach lessons. This notion is often attributed to Perrault, whose stories included morals delivered in rhyme (Cashdan, 1999).

Fairy tales, as told through magical adventures, help make stories more valuable for children by mirroring real life struggles they may face growing up. By addressing human weaknesses, fairy tales use fantasy to explain problems that adults and children face when trying to lead more fulfilling lives (Cashdan, 1999). With the fairy tale, the basic structures of behaviors and struggles are evident in mirroring “collective unconscious material” (von Franz, 1987, p. 113). Fairy tales are important because “rules of behavior on how to cope with these things” (von Franz, 1987, p.157) are found, much like the battle between good and evil. As time progresses, our thoughts on fairy tales and the meanings they hold for children will likely continue to change. Fairy tales have always been products of the culture and era of which they are a part (Cashdan, 1999; Tatar, 2003; Zipes, 2011).

As visual representations of well-known fairy tales increase in the world of today, one of the most common tales is about Snow White. Many scholars have studied *Snow White* both critically and structurally. Bacchilega (1988) proposed a critical reading of the *Snow White* tale. The results made clear the ideological nature and power of the metaphor of *Snow White*, in both its cultural and its narrative implications. Bacchilega (1988) stated the tale “implicitly reassures its readers of the value of their cultural and narrative norms by legitimizing those images the mirror presents as true”, yet “questions the truth of those expectations by making the ideological frame of the mirror visible” (p. 300). In order to examine the two characters in *OUAT* based on the tale of *Snow White*, it is essential to describe the popular and most well-known versions.

Snow White is one of the most memorable fairy tales of all time not only due to its popularity in the Grimm collection, but it also because it was the start of Walt Disney's career as an animator of feature-length cartoons (Cashdan, 1999). *Snow White* includes most of the elements that make up a fairy tale, including an encounter with a witch or a negative force, the defeat of the witch, and a happy ending for the prince and princess. The next section will provide brief summaries of the written and animated versions of *Snow White*, where similar structure and meanings are evident.

Snow White narratives.

This section will describe the two most popular versions of *Snow White*, the written version from the brothers Grimm and the animated film version from Disney. *Snow White* is one of the best-known fairy tales and has been told for centuries in various forms in several countries and languages (Bettelheim, 1976).

The Grimm Brothers published several versions of this story. The first version was published in 1811 and begins with a Queen making a wish for a child and so Snow White is born. By the second version, published in 1819, the character of the mother is changed to a stepmother due to implications or concerns with children viewing their own mother figures negatively (Saunders, 2008). It is much simpler to portray a stepmother as wicked than a birth mother. In the tale, the Queen asks her mirror "who is the fairest in the land?" with each response being the same, that she, the Queen, is the fairest. One day, when the mirror responds that Snow White is fairer than the Queen by 1,000 times, the Queen becomes consumed with jealousy. She plans a way to be rid of her competition, a seven year old named Snow White. The Queen orders her huntsman to take Snow White into the woods, kill her, and bring back her lungs and liver for the Queen to eat.

The huntsman returns and the Queen cooks and eats what she thinks is Snow White's lung and liver. It is revealed the huntsman actually spared Snow White's life and let her escape. Snow White finds the dwarfs' cottage as she runs away. When the dwarfs come home, they find Snow White in one of their beds. The dwarfs ask how she came to be in their house and she explains her situation. The dwarfs, pitying her, offer for her to stay with them but she must cook, sew, make the beds and clean for them.

Upon realizing Snow White is still alive and the huntsman lied, the Queen plots Snow White's death. She realizes the only people who could have rescued Snow White are the dwarfs. The Queen disguises herself as an old peddler woman in her first attempt to kill Snow White, making three attempts to kill Snow White in total. The first attempt includes gifting Snow White bodice laces. The Queen ties them on Snow White so tight that Snow White can no longer breathe. The dwarfs arrive to their cottage, loosen the laces, and revive Snow White. The Queen changes her disguise a second time, makes a poisoned comb, and gives it to Snow White. Once Snow White places the comb in her hair, she falls over dead. Again, the dwarfs return in time to remove the comb and bring Snow White back to life.

In her final attempt, the Queen poisons half of an apple. In a different disguise, the Queen presents the apple to Snow White, who initially refuses. Desperate to be rid of Snow White, the Queen takes a bite from the un-poisoned side. She then offers the rest of the apple to Snow White, who takes a bite from the poisoned side and dies. The dwarfs find Snow White dead and cry for three days. They build a glass coffin to place her in because her body has not decayed. The Prince accidentally finds the dwarfs cottage while searching for shelter. Once he sees the lifeless Snow White, he falls in love with her and tries to buy her from the dwarfs.

The dwarfs refuse to sell her but decide to give her to the Prince once they see how much he loves her. The Prince's servant, who has to carry Snow White's body in the glass coffin everywhere, stumbles and knocks the coffin on something which causes the apple piece to fall out of Snow White's mouth, which brings her back to life. In the first Grimm version, the servant actually slaps Snow White in the face from annoyance of having to carry the coffin around but was revised by the second version. The story concludes with Snow White and the Prince getting married. The Queen is invited to the wedding and forced to wear iron shoes pulled from the fire and dance in them until she falls over dead.

Many aspects of the Grimm version were changed by Disney to fit the medium of animated film. The opening credits note that this version is adapted from the Grimm Fairy tale, but prominently displays Walt Disney as the creator of the film. In the film, the Queen is depicted as evil right away and Snow White is shown as an orphan, which is a clear change from the Grimm version. "Presenting the two females as polar opposites simplifies the good versus evil element for the younger audience, but also reinforces a binary of good versus evil. There is no in between" (Saunders, 2008, p. 77).

Every day, the Queen checks her mirror to make sure she is still fairer than Snow White, who she fears will surpass her beauty. "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" she asks. The mirror replies Snow White and describes her as having lips red as the rose, hair black as ebony, and skin white as snow. Snow White, appearing in her mid-teens, is shown as a servant and meets a Prince while performing her chores.

Angered with the mirror's response, the Queen instructs her huntsman to take Snow White into the woods and kill her. The huntsman argues with the Queen and is met with a threat from the Queen. She hands him a box with sword through a heart as the clasp. She instructs him

to bring Snow White's heart in this box to her once he kills Snow White. The huntsman cannot kill Snow White and lets her go. The huntsman kills a boar and brings the heart to the Queen in place of Snow White's.

Snow White runs through the woods and is frightened. She stumbles upon the dwarfs' cottage and assumes a domestic role in the house by cleaning it. The dwarfs, who work as miners, return from work to find Snow White asleep in one of their beds. Snow White introduces herself and guesses their names based on their personalities. When the Queen, while holding the box containing what she believes as Snow White's heart, asks the mirror who is the fairest, the mirror replies Snow White. The Queen realizes she was tricked and becomes even angrier.

She plots to kill Snow White. Using potions and liquids in order to disguise herself as a peasant's wife, she transforms into an old woman. The Queen creates a sleeping death potion to poison an apple. The only antidote to the potion is love's first kiss. She places the red, poisoned apple among green apples in a basket and travels to the dwarfs' cottage. The animals of the forest, which possess human-like qualities, try to stop the Queen as she nears the cottage but fail when Snow White lets the Queen inside. The animals immediately go to warn the dwarfs.

Snow White is tricked by the Queen into thinking the apple is a wishing apple. Snow White wishes for her Prince, takes a bite, and dies. Once the queen sees Snow White dead, she leaves the cottage just as the dwarfs arrive, who then chase her to a cliff. As the Queen tries to crush the dwarfs with a boulder, the cliff crumbles below her causing her to fall. The boulder ends up falling on the Queen and killing her. The dwarfs place the lifeless Snow White in a glass coffin. The Prince, who has been searching for Snow White, finds her in the coffin. He kisses her and wakes her with love's first kiss. The Prince puts Snow White on his horse and they walk into the sunset living happily ever after.

Snow White scholarship.

Swann Jones (1983) attempted to identify the structure of the written tale of *Snow White* by drawing on the structuralist methodology principles of Propp and Dundes. The narrative patterns of fairy tales consist of reliable events, even when having several versions. With the tale of *Snow White*, the heroine may be *killed* differently in each version, but she is always killed. The killing is considered the significant action of that event (Swann Jones, 1983). Swann Jones identified nine main episodes that are consistently repeated, thus considered significant events in the several versions of *Snow White*.

These nine episodes include the *origin*, which explains the creation of Snow White (heroine), or describes the familial situation. *Jealousy* occurs when the Evil Queen (persecutor) becomes jealous of Snow White's beauty. *Expulsion* is when the Evil Queen orders the heroine's death or otherwise expels her from home. The *Adoption* episode is when the heroine is rescued from her expulsion. *Renewed Jealousy* occurs when the persecutor hears the heroine has survived her expulsion. *Death* takes place when the persecutor apparently kills the heroine, despite the interference of the heroine's companions. The *Exhibition* episode occurs when the heroine's companions prepare and exhibit her body. *Resuscitation* describes how the heroine is revived. Lastly, the *resolution* is the episode that details the ultimate outcome of the story.

Swann Jones (1983) determined "the fundamental pattern of action of *Snow White* and certain related folktales of persecuted heroines depicts a repetition of hostilities directed against the heroine" (p. 63), and is considered the essential paradigm of *Snow White*. Swann Jones also found that "narrative structures in *Snow White* serve a variety of useful functions for the audience of that narrative," demonstrating the complexity of fairy tales (p. 71).

Girardot (1977) examined initiation in the story of *Snow White*, noting "the proposition

that fairy tales not only vaguely suggest initiatory themes at the level of individual symbols but that the narrative form of a fairy tale as a particular structural constellation of symbols basically reveals an initiatory pattern” (p. 275). Girardot’s (1977) method of analysis was “to combine both a consideration of form with an analysis of the symbolism of particular constituent units” (p. 280). Girardot (1977) identified *Snow White* as a moral tale cautioning on the damaging consequences of pride. He also determined the tale demonstrates the meaning of human life, “as a sacred round, a dance, that speaks of the necessity of sacrificing self-love in order to discover true love” (p. 298). According to Girardot (1977), the tales of *Snow White* demonstrate “the paradigmatic metaphor of life as a constant cyclic process where death, a return to the beginning, is the necessary condition for new life” (p. 299).

Disney became extremely successful with the advent of animated film based on fairy tales. Disney portrayed what he considered the positive aspects of the *Märchen*, where good and beautiful young girls are rewarded with handsome husbands. He also exaggerated the negative aspects of the *Märchen*, especially in making the stepmothers in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella* more villainous and ugly than in the original written tales (Stone, 1975, 1981). Walt Disney was one of “the many reworkers of *Märchen* in past decades – but because of the enormous success of his films and their continuing popularity through re-releases, his ideas and ideals still exert a major influence on people’s views of fairy tales” (Stone, 1981, p. 238), including the creators of *OUAT*.

The Disney Media Corporation owns ABC, which broadcasts the series *OUAT*. Interestingly, the television series includes several non-fairy tale Disney characters, such as Merida from *Brave* and Elsa from *Frozen*. Visual icons and visual representations increasingly dominate fairy tales. Though fairy tales are still read aloud, children are often introduced to the

characters through films and videos (Cashdan, 1999). With oral and written fairy tales existing at the same time, there is a difference in the roles fairy tales play now compared to the past, especially with the popularity of television and film. The “difference can be seen in the manner in which they are produced, distributed, and marketed. Profit mars their stories and their cultural heritage. Folk and fairy tales as products of the imagination are in danger of becoming instrumentalized and commercialized” (Zipes, 2002, p. 2).

As previously discussed, the structure of fairy tales is similar across several cultures and languages. Another aspect consistently present within fairy tales is the battle between good and evil. This battle is commonly demonstrated through the struggle a hero/heroine has with a villain. The next section will describe literature centered on the villains in fairy tales.

Fairy tale villains.

This section details the literature and scholarship in regard to evil and villains in fairy tales. In most tales, the female villains hold a dual identity. This is demonstrated when the characters are depicted as wicked stepmothers or evil servants, where “they remain firmly anchored in the world of family life and figure among the facts of everyday life. Conflicts and tensions between them and the tales’ protagonists reflect nothing more than the observable realities of human life” (Tatar, 2003, p. 144; also Bettelheim, 1976).

Obvious to the reader of fairy tales is that stepmothers are the main means of enchantment and entrapment for the heroines. Stepmothers are shown as a “source of evil in countless fairy tales, and it is no accident that they rank among the most memorable villains in these tales” (Tatar, 2003, p. 141). The witchlike nature of the stepmother is further illustrated by her use of magic. According to Cashdan (1999), the witch character should not be taken literally; she is more a representation of the negative forces or tendencies of the self. One of the most

recognizable aspects of the tale of *Snow White*, besides the poisoned apple, is the character of the Evil Queen. The Evil Queen is not only the giver of the apple but also the stepmother of Snow White.

Stone (1975) noted that the Disney films of fairy tales, especially *Cinderella*, *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*, all have passive heroines and assertive female villains, which reinforce the “already popular stereotype of the innocent beauty victimized by the wicked villainess (p. 44). Stone (1975) suggested that Disney is responsible for perpetuating the stereotype and storyline of good versus bad women. Also noted was that heroes succeed because they act, not because they are. This sentiment is also applied to villains and their lack of success. The actions of a villain lead to their defeat or lack of success in the fairy tales.

A major player in fairy tales is the witch, often depicted as a stepmother or Queen. This villainous character is easily identified by the deadly threat she poses to the hero or heroine (Cashdan, 1999). The Evil Queen in *Snow White* will not rest until she knows Snow White is dead and no longer a threat to her vanity. When the witch is shown as a threat to the hero or heroine, the character of the witch also brings to light the inner flaws of the reader (Cashdan, 1999).

Of the many figures in a fairy tale, the witch is the most undeniable. She is the central character who outlines the battle between good and evil. The character of the witch has the power to alter people’s lives. Few figures in a fairy tale are as powerful as the witch, including the hero or heroine. For a fairy tale to succeed and to accomplish addressing the struggles of the self, the witch must die because it is the witch who embodies the sinful parts of the self. Once the witch dies, everyone lives happily ever after (Cashdan, 1999).

There are occasions when characters may perform the role of villain at different times throughout the same narrative based on their actions. Fiske (1987) described how Propp came to the conclusion that “the functions of characters are stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled,” where functions constitute the essential components of a tale (p. 137). Fiske (1987) also stated, “the struggle between the hero and villain is a metaphorical transformation...such a struggle is fundamental to all societies, and the narrative explores the role of human and social agents in it” (p. 138).

Fairy tales are both entertaining and enchanting; they are as timely today as they were hundreds of years ago. The underlying dynamic of the struggle between good and evil continues to resonate in the stories told and depicted today. For this reason, the witch, or Evil Queen, will continue to be a major presence in fairy tales that consistently grow and adapt to the changing environment in order to survive (Zipes, 2011). The fairy tale adaptations include television series like *OUAT* where narratives depict new or evolved meanings. Fiske (1985) noted that television meanings are not restricted to television. Their meanings are cultural and used to make sense of social experience. This section included previous literature on the examination of evil and villains in regard to fairy tales. The next section details the scholarship associated with television and media.

Television/Media studies.

Television and media studies are the subjects of this section, including the scholarship on specific television characters - villains and anti-heroes. Particular focus is given to Gerbner's cultivation theory, which suggests that television holds a significant, although slight, influence on a viewer's beliefs and ideals. Television's influence on viewers requires television series that

both interest and captivate audiences. A large contributor to the interest and enjoyment on a show are the characters, making television characters an important area to study.

In order to tell stories, television series or serials are used to demonstrate a continuation of narratives. Fiske (1987) defines serials as having the same characters and continuous storylines, often more than one, moving forward episode to episode. With serials, the “characters appear to live continuously between episodes, they grow and change with time, and have active memories of previous events” (Fiske, 1987, p. 150). Using Fiske's definition, *OUAT* is a serial and will be treated as such in this thesis. Through repetition and implied lives of the television characters outside of the episodes, a scale of time similar to the viewing audience enhances the ability to relate to the characters.

Since television characters appear to have a past, present, and future, like the viewing audience, it becomes easier to relate to the identities and struggles of those characters (Fiske, 1987). Newcomb (1988) argued that television “is an extension and elaboration of other popular culture processes,” (p. 88) meaning that what is portrayed on television is common to all popular culture media due to its role as a central storytelling system. Because of its commonality and role as storyteller, television then serves as a cultural forum (Newcomb, 1988).

With television as a cultural forum and mainstay, understanding of culture partly comes from what is consumed. Baeten (1996) described the philosophy of culture as providing “the ‘lenses,’ as it were, through which experience is viewed and recognized”. Culture becomes the “means by which these lenses are reground by those who use them,” and “the process of passing the lenses from one to another” (p. 7). Narratives and television become essential parts of cultural production. Through stories, humans continually understand and discover meaning. “Mythmaking is the backbone of culture, the fundamental means by which human beings” create

and become human (Baeten, 1996, p. 20).

As with written narratives, the common struggle between good and evil is frequently portrayed on television shows. Scholarship on good characters, or heroes, is prevalent in the field of communication but not much research has been focused entirely on the villains of television. To understand and grasp the meaning of the good, one must also examine the bad. A focus on villains is important because coping strategies, depictions, and cultural perceptions of evil come from our social experiences, with television being a large portion of those experiences. Because television holds power and influence over its viewers, it is important to discuss the literature and previous scholarship on this topic.

Television, as a medium for both storytelling and popular culture, can reach mass audiences and is designed to homogenize a diverse audience in order to be profitable (Fiske, 1987; Gerbner, 1998). Television consumers construct or shape their views based on the consistent bombardment of information presented through television, thus making television a frequent source of values, ideologies, and perspectives (Gerbner, 1998; Norden, 2000; Goodall, 2012). Television serves as a common tool to tell narratives. Coats and Hoover's 2011 study based on participant interviews suggests "media can become a common source of shared language and shared experiences that are integrated into interactions and potentially into life narratives and identity constructions as well" (p. 886).

Television plays a role in the consumption and understanding of culture and society. Television serves as society's major storyteller due to being narrational in its mode (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 2002; Porter, Larson, Harthcock, & Berg Nellis, 2002), as well as being readily accessible, easily disseminated, and popularly consumed. Television is sometimes seen as a window to the world, or a mirror reflecting society and culture, showing general

patterns of behavior (Barbatsis, Wong & Herek, 1983; Fiske, 1987). Fiske (1987) points out “culture is concerned with meanings and pleasures: our culture consists of the meanings we make of our social experience and of our social relations, and therefore the sense we have of our ‘selves’” (p. 20). Morality, good, evil, right, and wrong are essential to culture and to understanding life; and these concepts continually appear in fairy tales and adaptations of fairy tales. Our life, social experiences, and previous understandings influence how we consume media and what we take from narratives presented to us.

Gerbner, et al. (2002) point out, “television is the source of the most broadly shared images and messages in history. It is the mainstream of the common symbolic environment into which our children are born and in which we all live out our lives” (p. 43). Television becomes the system of storytelling and for sharing social and every day information about our culture with audiences everywhere. Gerbner, et al. (2002) posit that, “what is most likely to cultivate stable and common conceptions of reality is, therefore, the overall pattern of programming to which total communities are regularly exposed over long periods of time” (p. 45). The types of programs and narratives audiences are exposed to contributes to perceptions and beliefs not only about culture but parts of cultures like evil as well.

Cultivation theory describes the contributions of television viewing to a viewer’s conceptions and perceptions of social reality.

The most general hypothesis of cultivation analysis is that those who spend more time ‘living’ in the world of television are more likely to see the ‘real world’ in terms of the images, values, portrayals, and ideologies that emerge through the lens of television.

(Gerbner, et al., 2002, p. 47)

Meanings from television “are not confined to television, but are cultural and are actively used within the culture to make sense of social experience” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, as cited in Fiske, 1985, p. 177). So, the realistic narratives on television series serve as ways of explaining social experience that give the viewer power because of the explanation of experience (Fiske, 1985). But, as Gerbner (1998) points out, “cultivation is both dependent on and a manifestation of the extent to which television’s imagery dominates viewers’ sources of information” (p. 182).

Gerbner and Fiske demonstrate an agreement on the power and influence of television but have opposing notions toward meaning. Fiske states television meanings as being used culturally to understand social experience. Gerbner’s stance is dependent on the dominant imagery consumed by the heavy viewer of television. Inclusion of Gerbner in the review of literature is essential due to the analysis of television. This is because the images consumed hold influence, while Fiske’s inclusion in the review of literature is critical to understanding how television meanings are not restricted to the characters on television but are used culturally. Like language, narratives are used to convey meaning and also to make meaning, which includes the use of signs.

Visual rhetoric.

Semiotics is the study of signs, “which are defined as anything that can be used to substitute or stand for something else” (Berger, 1995, p. 33). Semiotics is based on the idea that language is a social fact. Meanings are considered an essential part of social relations and social relations become an essential part of meaning. Semiotics is interested in the ways meanings are created and shared in a culture, as well as the structural meanings (Fiske, 1985).

When studying signs the goal is to see how meaning is created in texts, and “texts” are not limited to the written word. When analyzing television texts, semiotics may include

examining the facial expressions of a character, the lighting or music used in order to determine how meaning is made. Also of interest in the study of signs is the thought that “meaning is connected to relationships and that texts generate their meaning, in part, by setting up a hidden structure of oppositions that helps us find out what the texts mean” (Berger, 1995, p. 33-34). Berger (2010) noted the following distinction between language and speech, where language is “a social institution that has rules about how words are to be used” and speech “is the way individuals use language” (p. 20).

Fashion is considered the “equivalent of speech and represents all the clothes available to us, just as language represents all the words available to us, as found in dictionaries. What we choose to wear is the equivalent of speech,” (Berger, 2010, p. 21) this same notion can be applied to the costuming on the television series *OUAT*. The recognition of fashion being equivalent to speech, as demonstrated through the show’s costuming, is important in the analysis of the communication of evil in this thesis. A purpose of semiotics is to “identify the hidden codes that shape our beliefs and the way we find meaning in the world...Codes shape our behavior as individuals and as members of groups, societies, nations, and cultures” (Berger, 2010, p. 25).

Style, or visual rhetoric, is a form of communication that influences others, in the same vain as written or verbal rhetoric. Brummett (2008), like Berger (2010), defined style as a mode of communication made up of actions, objects, and behaviors used to form messages that state who we are or who we want to be. “It is therefore also a system of communication with rhetorical influence on others. And as such, style is a means by which power and advantage are negotiated, distributed, and struggled over in society” (Brummett, 2008, p. xi).

The actions, objects and behaviors that form messages of influence also play a role in our

culture. Style is “so central to popular culture that the rhetoric of style and the rhetoric of popular culture are practically the same thing. One might say that thinking in terms of style is a way to think about popular culture” (Brummett, 2008, p. xiii). If style serves as a social medium, then information about style must then be widely shared. Drawing on this broadly shared knowledge, television producers use style in order to demonstrate who characters are or want to be to the audience.

Television narrative analysis.

Because television serves as a mode for storytelling and sharing information globally, understanding the meanings behind the narratives presented is as important as the visual influence of style. Porter, et al. (2002) sought to examine the structure of television’s narratives in order to explore the major components used to create the text. Porter, et al., (2002) acknowledged that while television narratives are linear much like written novels, they have qualities that differentiate them from other forms, including an emphasis on more complex and visual character development and continuous storylines that flow between episodes of a series.

Television narratives may embody the repetitious and straightforward structure of the fairy tales, but television must be able to build into it the contradictions that weaken endings to a show (Fiske, 1987). Characters act as the contradictions in order to weaken the *end* of an episode due to their appearance week over week. “One of the most striking components of television programs is that many of the same characters reappear each week. We not only get a glimpse of the characters’ worlds, but we remember their past experiences” (Porter, et al., 2002, p. 23). Thus, characters can become more like people we know, root for and like, instead of being viewed as only fictional.

The growth of certain characters occurs over time in a television series, which

demonstrates the several underlying layers of the character's change. Because of this, television can "continue character development both on a regularly scheduled basis and over a long period of time" (Porter, et al., 2002, p. 24). The story arc, a particular storyline spanning a number of episodes, has an important function in a television narrative. "It resists closure and maintains continuity, thus shifting attention from plot to character" (p. 24). The actual events (as demonstrated through actions or happenings) and existents (as demonstrated through characters or settings) that make up the narrative's story are components suggested for examination in addition to the structure (Porter, et al., 2002). Fiske (1987) stated that reading television structurally requires a focus on how a sense of the real is established. It requires the scholar to see that characters act primarily as functions of the plot. Even the character descriptions and characteristics are understood in terms of the overall structure of social values, which are embodied by the characters.

Porter, et al. (2002) developed a Scene Function Model specific to television to identify certain narrative functions within a scene that demonstrate how those scenes advance or enhance the narrative. This "adds more functionality to narrative analysis by providing an elaboration on and a functional explanation of kernels and satellites" (Porter, et al., 2002, p. 25). A kernel is an event in the story that, if altered, would change the plot. A satellite focuses on character, setting or other actions; if removed the storyline would remain unchanged. Porter, et al. (2002) elaborate that, "satellites focus on character relationships or provide background information on a character, and help create the texture of the narrative by providing depth and richness to the story" (p. 25). With the Scene Function Model, patterns of how specific scenes in the narrative achieve the goals of the narrative are identified, adding an important contribution to the analysis and discussion of media messages.

Just as structure of the narrative is important to the analysis of media messages, the characters in the narratives are equally important to understanding how the messages are transmitted to the audience. A primary way of showing change in the plot is through the characters. Transformation is linked to our understanding of character in a story. Film and television characters show development and change through their actions and plot structure (O'Meara, 2015). If the characters are consistent with their traits and behaviors, audiences can interpret that being the norm for the character but when the character behaves inconsistently with the previously interpreted traits and behaviors, the audiences are able to determine the character has changed (O'Meara, 2015). O'Meara (2015) identified three types of actions seen in television narratives, each of which imply change.

The three actions are the experience of significant life events like a birth, death or marriage, the experience of intense emotions like raging in anger, and observable contrasts in behavior. Like the vengeful, evil queen offering help to her enemies with no hidden motive, for example. As O'Meara (2015) points out, "television serials emphasize plots that transpire over time, from one episode to another, with characters and audiences who remember developments along the way" (p. 191).

This type of functional analysis is influenced by structuralist narratology examining the repetition into the frameworks and structure of popular television series (O'Meara, 2015). Analysis of the three types of character change actions can lead to the recognition of new patterns of change and development. Change in a character is an "essential ingredient of narrative, so television series require frequent character changes to sustain their stories. Regular characters experience transforming events frequently, they display intense emotions continually and they show contrasts in behaviour regularly" (O'Meara, 2015, p. 198).

The importance of television research is further demonstrated with the tools and methods adapted to study not only television as a medium but also the narratives presented within the television shows. Television shows demonstrate similar formulas and storylines much like the structure and functions of fairy tales across all cultures and languages. One aspect that is consistently present within both written and visual stories is the battle between good and evil. That battle is most commonly demonstrated as a struggle between a hero/heroine and a villain. The next section will include literature centered on villains and evil in television and film.

Television/Media villains.

This section will refer to applicable literature on evil and villains in media. Turnau (2004) noted, “mere exposure to evil in popular culture does not have an effect on how we perceive evil” although, “elements of evil are set in meaningful context” (p. 395). Television and film are able to visually depict meaningful context, which assists the viewer in identifying evil actions or characters. Because of this study’s focus on the transformations of evil, only literature analyzing villains or antiheroes will be reviewed in this section.

The antihero is defined as a protagonist that might “display qualities of both heroes and villains; acting in morally ambiguous, and at times unjustifiable ways, if even to reach noble goals” (Shafer & Raney, 2012, p. 1029). Some antiheroes are seeking revenge, some are well intentioned but flawed, and some are immoral but redeemable. Raney (2004) described the need for an antihero through the fact that, “most contend that some form of conflict – often dichotomized as good-evil, right-wrong, happiness-sadness...is at the heart of drama...viewers expect to encounter opposing and often irreconcilable sides in a conflict within the narrative, with characters representing each side” (p. 354). Antiheroes are becoming more common as main characters because they represent a truer depiction of the struggles faced by humans in real

life. This shift from villainous characters into antiheroes is evident with the character Regina in *OUAT*. Currently, there is limited research on antiheroes and villains but this focus continues to grow with the success of television series like *Dexter* (Manos Jr., J., 2006 – 2013) and *Breaking Bad* (Gilligan, V., 2008 -2013).

Raney (2004) found that viewers with stronger positive feelings toward a character had a stronger reaction of empathy as well. Alternatively, “once characters are hated, we are unable to empathize with them and are free to wish for their demise” (p. 351). Raney (2004) concluded that schemas lead viewers to expect that good characters will do good things and that bad characters will do bad things, so it seems logical to assume that “viewers use those expectations as lenses through which they interpret characters and their actions” (p. 356). Raney also noted that there are times when viewers “interpret a *good* character’s actions or motivations as good, regardless of the specific behaviors or motivations, and vice versa for *bad* characters” (p. 356). Another finding was that viewers often “know who the good and bad characters are as soon as or even before they show up on screen (Raney, 2004, p. 361), which is evident in *OUAT* through the show’s use of visual cues like costume and lighting.

Expanding on the previous antihero and liking research of Raney, Janicke and Raney (2015) studied the “enjoyment of so-called antihero narratives, those increasingly popular stories featuring protagonists whose conduct is at best morally ambiguous, questionable, and sometimes unjustifiable” (p. 485). While this thesis is not analyzing audience perceptions of the transformation and communication of evil, including research on antihero likeability is important to acknowledge since viewership is essential to the success and continuation of a television series.

Janicke and Raney (2015) found “with the typical hero narratives, protagonists are loved more as their behaviors and motivations are judged to be morally right and good, while villains are despised relative to how immoral and evil their works are judged to be” (p. 486). Through the experiences from entertainment media, story lines, and character descriptions, viewers develop story scheme knowledge that help them classify characters as either good or bad. This classification enables viewers to interpret a character’s behaviors as either moral or immoral, which contributes to their liking of the character (Janicke & Raney, 2015).

Viewers determine whether antiheroes violate moral standards through dialog, innuendo, allusions, and then guide their information processing by providing justification for a character’s immoral behavior (Shafer & Raney, 2012). For example, the audience is able to determine whether a character’s behavior in *OUAT* is for revenge, lost love, to gain power and control, or if they are innately evil to help guide in the justification of the character’s behavior. In the development of television series characters and narratives,

one can position oneself or be positioned in discourse as powerful or powerless, admirable or blameworthy, etc. In turn, a position can be specified by characterizing how a speaker’s contributions are taken as bearing on these and other ‘polarities of character’ in the context of an overarching storyline. (Herman, 2007, p. 201)

In reference to overall narratives, “television is presenting morality plays where the perpetrators of violence are always punished and the victims are shown suffering. With this form of portrayal, viewers learn that violence is bad, and that it should be avoided” (Potter & Smith, 1999, p. 131). Potter and Smith (1999) argued that there is a difference between villains using violence and heroes using it, because the person using violence determines a change to the plot. Potter and Smith suggest conducting analysis of a television show that tells different stories

simultaneously across different narrative strata due to television being where we work out what we believe as a culture. *OUAT* fits into the complex television narratives they propose for future research.

In regard to violence, Gerbner (1970) found that heroes and villains are equally likely to use violence and to initiate it. It is the heroes who are successful in their use of violence, while villains are not. Noting the findings of both Gerbner (1970) and Fiske (1987), Vinci (2012) suggests that heroes are socially central types who embody the dominant ideology, whereas villains are considered as others. Villains demonstrate ideologies that oppose the dominant, much like that of a powerful queen viewed as wicked opposing a kind and compassionate princess.

Media influence is complex and additional factors like profitability and ownership should be accounted for when examining the communication and resulting perceptions of evil. Television and film creators change the face of evil constantly and “in doing so, they have turned evil into nothing short of a ubiquitous commodity for our consumption” (Norden, 2000, p. 50). Evil and villains are depicted more diversely than previously before. Characters on television are no longer just representations of individual people, but are modes of sharing ideology and values (Fiske, 1987). Through the rounded characters on television, with emphasis placed on the individuality of the character, viewers can reflect on the characters as complex modern individuals, much like the viewers themselves (Petersen, 2008).

Petersen (2008) pointed out, “the representation of a magical universe and humans with extraordinary abilities appeals to us on a basic cognitive level because of counterintuitive and therefore memorable properties” (p. 104). The fight against evil is shown as very clear-cut, with little doubt as to who is considered evil in television. This distinction is through costume,

behaviors, actions, dialogue, and the other characters' perceptions of a character. Petersen (2008) states, "the representation of good versus evil is therefore crucial, and one necessitates the other" (p. 97). The duality in the narratives on television allows the audience to identify with characters' struggles and have the opportunity to reflect on the insecurities or uncertainties in their own lives.

With limited research on villains in television, literature on villains in film is included in this section due to the similar form of media – telling a story visually over a certain amount of time. The following study is included due to its examination of good and evil as depicted in a fantastical film. This aligns to the criteria of the series *OUAT* and the research of this thesis in the examination of good and evil as portrayed in a fairy tale adaptation. Vinci (2012) noted in his analysis of *Hellboy II*, that "good prevails over evil, but the process alters irreversibly the meaning of these terms" (p. 1042). Vinci (2012) examined *Hellboy II* in relation to reactions of the "overt complication of human agency and morality, critics of fantasy film...still oversimplify the issue, relying upon platitudes and stereotypes, stating repeatedly that fantasy allegorizes moral dilemmas and reconstructs the 'eternal' antagonism between good and evil" (p. 1042-1043). Again, the heroes are the embodiment of popular and dominate values and ideals whereas villains serve as the other, the non-dominant or uncomfortable values or ideals.

This thesis examines and analyzes evil as a circumstance, rather than a character description. Because evil is portrayed as circumstance instead of a descriptor, evil becomes transformative. Characters are able to shift away from or toward evil. The study in this paper is significant because *OUAT* depicts what was once considered a binary absolute of good and evil as a complex and humanistic struggle, making it much harder to disentangle good from evil. The portrayal of television characters experiencing the same entanglement contributes to the

viewers' understanding and ability to make sense of that experience and cultural perceptions of evil.

This struggle is presented on the show with well-known fairy tale characters set in the modern world and in other magical realms. This relatively new show premiered in 2011, which might explain why there is no published scholarly research specific to the series. It is important to study and analyze evil as fluid on a television series that brings well-known fairy tales to life because of the influence television and narratives have not only on popular culture but also societal ideologies and suggested ways of sense making. In addition, this thesis contributes to the need for study on how evil is communicated and constructed in television narratives (Norden, 2000; Turnau, 2004).

Research Question

Through the narratives of Regina and Snow, evil is no longer communicated or recognized as a fairy tale character trait, but as a shifting component of the characters and their narratives. Evil and its identifiable traits are no longer restricted to the evil characters in *OUAT*. Evil transforms, evolves, and consumes other characters, which can leave a once *evil* character a hero. This is significant due to the novel way of presenting what were once considered binary opposites, good and evil. This presentation of evil as transformative and fluid in the characters is in stark contrast to the way fairy tales primarily demonstrate good and evil in the characters as black and white, with no in between.

Television serves as an area for viewers to identify, relate, and make sense of their struggles similar to the struggles or conflict portrayed in a character's development. I hope to contribute additional findings supporting the importance of telling complex narratives, showing layered character development, and depicting the fluidity of evil in characters as portrayed in a

popular television series through an in-depth analysis of how the transformations of evil are communicated through and by Regina and Snow and in their narratives.

Scholarly focus on fantastical or mythical television series is not new. Fantastical and supernatural television series previously examined with research published include *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, J., 1997-2003), *X-Files* (Carter, C., 1993-2002), and *Supernatural* (Kripke, E., 2005-Present). No other published studies have examined the communication of evil, as portrayed in two main female characters, on a prime-time television series dedicated entirely to fairy tale characters and their narratives. The following chapter will detail the method to be used in this original thesis research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the methodology used for this original thesis research. A qualitative method of textual analysis will be used to analyze how transformations of evil are communicated in the prime-time television series *Once Upon A Time (OUAT)*. Specifically, a close reading of character narratives and rhetorical analysis of visuals on the show are used in the examination of how evil is communicated. Analysis of a prime-time series was selected in part because “the most popular, mainstream, internationally distributed programs...are the ones of greatest significance in popular culture” (Fiske, 1987, p. 13). Mainstream programs, like *OUAT*, are significant in popular culture because of their ability to reach and maintain an audience, which justifies support for scholarly focus and analysis.

OUAT was chosen as the focus of this study because of its classification as a popular American fairy tale drama series. The series premiered in 2011 as television’s number one new drama for adults ages 18-49 and as ABC’s highest rating in the Sunday 8 p.m. time slot (TV By The Numbers, 10/25/2011). The popularity of the series in the adult demographic is interesting due to the core subject of the series being fairy tales, which are commonly aimed toward children like in the Disney films. Acknowledgment of the primary audience by the television writers and producers means audiences influence the narratives and subject matter in the series as evidenced in *OUAT*, which does contain adult themes such as violence and innuendo.

Each episode of *OUAT* tells multiple narratives to advance the series with a primary focus on one character, including a secondary storyline to show a point in that character’s life before the curse was cast. Every story and character is important to the movement of the overall narrative and each character plays a significant role in that progression, even if a small one. The

analysis of the sample episodes will describe the narrative progression of Regina (Lana Parrilla) and Snow (Ginnifer Goodwin), the actions that perpetuate or cause the transformation of evil in the characters and what that might mean in regard to the complexity of good and evil characters on the series. Characters in the series are primarily demonstrated as villains versus heroes, like in fairy tales.

As previously mentioned, the episodes of *OUAT* revolve around well-known fairy tale characters and their stories. The sample for this study includes episodes centered on Snow and Regina spanning seasons one through three (2011-2014). This research will only analyze certain episodes in seasons one, two and three for several reasons. First, Regina assumes the role of a hero in seasons four and five. Regina is no longer depicted as an evil character due to finding her happiness. Second, season four's primary storyline is between Elsa, the Snow Queen, and Emma Swan. In addition, other villains' stories, such as Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* and Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty*, serve larger roles in season four. Although Snow and Regina continue to appear as main characters, there is no longer a central focus on their storyline as it relates to their troubled relationship (Evil Queen versus Snow White) or their transformations to and away from evil. Lastly, season five is excluded because it is currently airing and will conclude in 2016, which is past the timeframe of this research.

The characters analyzed in this research are the Evil Queen, also known as Regina Mills, and Snow White, also known as Mary Margaret Blanchard. Throughout the rest of this thesis, the Evil Queen will be referred to as Regina and Snow White/Mary Margaret will be referred to as Snow. The characters were chosen because they are in the well-known fairy tale of *Snow White* and are identified as main good and evil characters consistently appearing in the series. *Snow White* is one of the best-known fairy tales and has been told for centuries in various forms in

several countries and languages (Bettelheim, 1976). Episodes centering on Regina and Snow will be viewed to uncover themes evident in their stories and actions. Primary focus is on how the fluid relationship with evil is depicted for the two characters, both through their narratives and visually. This thesis serves as a step toward a “fuller understanding of evil as constructed in film and television”(Norden, 2000, p. 53) through the analysis of narrative.

I will apply several methodologies in this textual analysis of *OUAT*. Using the Scene Function Model (SFM) as detailed by Porter, et al., (2002), I will describe the structure of the characters’ narratives in the series. The SFM identifies scenes as either kernels or satellites. Kernel scenes are essential to the structure and progression of the narrative. Satellite scenes serve as ways to provide continuity between scenes or background information. If a satellite scene were removed, the storyline would still progress and structure would remain. Only minor details contributing to the aesthetic of the story would be lost because satellites “help create the texture of the narrative by providing depth and richness to the story” (Porter, et al., 2002, p. 25).

Looking to semiotics and visual rhetoric as described by Berger (2000) and Brummett (2008), I will analyze the signs and symbols used to depict and portray Regina and Snow through nonverbal communication in order to understand how meaning is conveyed visually in the television series adaptation of *Snow White*. Semiotic analysis of visual signs is essential to include in the analysis of television shows because television is a visual medium and is able to convey messages to the viewer with visual cues. This difference between literature and visual media allows for a character’s personality, behavior, or motives to be shown without speech or written text.

Berger (2000) discussed a visual approach to semiotics as a way to analyze “facial expressions, hairstyles and hair colors, teeth, fashions in clothing ...eyeglasses and jewelry... in

terms of how they generate meaning and what they reflect about society and culture” (p. 35). Facial expressions, fashion, and posture convey a significant amount of meaning within the series. Codes, actions, and signs define good and evil characteristics. A code is a system of signs, whose rules and principles are shared among members of a culture and is used to produce and circulate meanings in and for that culture (Fiske, 1987).

Definitions and common characteristics of good and evil will be used to code actions of transformation. Good is defined as “virtuous, right, commendable, kind and benevolent” ([www.merriam-webster](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virtuous), n.d.). Evil means “morally reprehensible, arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct, and causing harm” ([www.merriam-webster](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evil), n.d.). Evil is also the intentional wrongdoing from a particular type of character. This character is one who enacts the wrongdoing because it wrong, takes pleasure from wrongness of the action, and does not exhibit any reactions like guilt, shame or regret (Perrett, 2002). Portions of the Scene Function Model, advanced by Porter, et al. (2002) are used to illuminate which actions and scenes are kernels or satellites and to provide additional insight in the analysis on the importance of portraying evil as fluid.

Using the Scene Function Model for narrative analysis as presented by Porter, et al. (2002) and semiotics as detailed by Berger (2000), I look to episodes centering on Regina and Snow in order to explore the transformations and interactions between them, focusing on the words, behaviors, nonverbal communication, and actions aligned with good and evil. Sound or music will not be analyzed due to the limited influence on the progression of characters’ narratives, which is the primary focus of this research and because they are not visual components.

There are limitations to using this method of analysis. I acknowledge that there is no such thing as a single, correct interpretation of any text. Additionally, textual analysis is not easily replicable due to analysis coming from a researcher with experiences and understandings of words and actions of his or her own (McKee, 2003). This thesis will not serve as the sole interpretation of the series, but as a contribution to the study of evil in television and, more generally, and exploration of how fairy tale adaptations can become an unlikely source of commentary on contemporary culture. This research serves to make that contemporary criticism clear.

CHAPTER FOUR

BACKGROUND

This chapter provides background information on the series *Once Upon A Time (OUAT)* and its main characters. In order to detail the narratives and common themes from Snow and Regina's narratives, additional information is essential to understanding the overarching narrative of the series. This section provides information specific to the storylines in seasons one through three as well as information on the six main characters. As stated, the focus of this research is specific to the narratives of two of the six main characters, Snow and Regina. The season summaries and characters described below are critical to understanding the following chapters because several characters and their stories are often intertwined. The first three seasons of the series *OUAT* are introduced and described below to provide background information required to understand the specific narratives. Following the season summaries are descriptions of the six main characters of the series.

Series Description

The television series *OUAT* is an example of fairy tales evolving in order to remain relevant in today's world. As previously mentioned, fairy tales become adaptations and products not only based on the culture or era in which they are told (Cashdan, 1999) but also based on different forms of media, like television. As cultures change, people make adjustments to familiar tales to stay relevant. *OUAT* demonstrates the adjustments made to the stories not only to engage a captive audience week after week but also to inform of or describe some common experiences of today. Fairy tales and stories are used to make sense of struggles and issues people face throughout their lives, yet it is the imagination of the audience that keep stories alive and relevant.

In general, fairy tales introduce us to multiple characters and narratives demonstrating battles between good and evil and the American fairy tale drama television series *OUAT* reflects this common function of fairy tales. The show is about the lives of fairy tale characters spanning different realms. Realms, in this research, refer to the kingdoms and lands introduced to the viewer throughout the series. Viewers experience the different realms from the perspectives of the characters, which include worlds similar to our own and settings from familiar fairy tales like NeverLand in *Peter Pan*. The single phrase “once upon a time” signifies the entrance to a different world (Joosen, 2007), and the series title and episodes embody that statement. Two primary realms in the series are Fairy Tale Land and Storybrooke. Fairy Tale Land is “filled with magic, monsters and all of the characters we all know from stories growing up. It's real, and so are the people in it. But unlike the ‘happily ever after’ you may have heard about, their stories continued, and The Evil Queen cast a Dark Curse over the land” (About the Show, n.d.).

A second realm depicted is the town of Storybrooke. “It's a quiet, little, New England town filled with people who go about their everyday lives with no idea who they really are. The Queen's Curse has trapped them here and placed her in near-complete control. They have no real memories and no real hope” (About the Show, n.d.). *OUAT* is, at its core, a story about hope.

For us, that's what a fairy tale is. It's that ability to think your life will get better...Adam and I just wanted to write about something hopeful that for one hour a week allows one to put everything aside and have that feeling that your dreams just may come true. (Edward Kitsis, About the Show, n.d)

In order to become a story about hope, *OUAT* tells multiple narratives in order to advance the series. Each episode centers on one character and includes a secondary story line to show a point in the character's life before or after the curse, which is a common plot structure in sitcoms and

other television shows.

How *OUAT* tells each character's story is as important as knowing the definitions in this research. Throughout this thesis, narrative and story are used interchangeably. Narrative and story describe the account of a character's life, including their actions, motives, behaviors, and thoughts. Bordwell and Thompson (2004) define story as "the set of all the events in a narrative, both the ones explicitly presented and those the viewer infers" (p. 70) and plot as "everything visibly and audibly present in the film before us" (p.71). Story line refers to the plot, or the main events of a character's life, which include their back-story. Story line also accounts for the main events of a season in the series. Although the episodes focus on one particular character's narrative and back-story, additional details to other characters' narratives are portrayed as well. For example, an episode may focus on the savior's narrative and provide glimpses into the trials and obstacles previously overcome by this character. In addition to the savior's narrative and back story, another characters' actions and brief backgrounds are portrayed as they relate to the character of focus in an episode.

When looking at the series as a whole, each story and character is important to the movement of the narratives and each plays a significant role, even if a small one. Again, the characters analyzed in this thesis are Regina and Snow. They are central figures in both the written fairy tale of *Snow White* and the current television adaptation. This thesis focuses on these two characters with the intent of examining how the fluidity of evil is communicated within and between them in the hopes of being accepted as a step toward a "fuller understanding of evil as constructed in film and television" (Norden, 2000, p. 53) through the analysis of narrative and visual rhetoric.

This original research is focused on the narratives of the two female main characters not

only due to the popularity of the fairy tale or because they are main characters. They are of focus primarily because their narratives are intertwined. Because the characters' narratives are closely linked, the characters' transformations toward and away from evil are apparent and similar to one another. While each narrative is unique and operates to move the character to grow and progress, Snow and Regina's narratives are entangled and often lead to influencing or perpetuating the other's story. It is because of the relationship between the Evil Queen and Snow White that the dark curse was cast and the realm of Storybrooke exists. Without these two main characters, there would not be a series. In order to discuss these specific characters and their story lines, I must first provide an overview of how the show has unfolded over the first three seasons.

Summary of the Seasons

In season one of *OUAT*, the viewer is introduced to Storybrooke, a quaint town with quite the secret. The town's mayor, Regina, created Storybrooke when she enacted a dark curse. This curse transported every person from Fairy Tale Land to Storybrooke, but without any memories or knowledge of who they truly are. For 28 years, time stopped in Storybrooke. Everyone continued with his or her Storybrooke lives while not aging. 28-year-old Emma is brought to Storybrooke after Henry, the son she gave up for adoption ten years earlier, finds her. Henry believes the people in his town of Storybrooke are actually fairy tale characters with no memories of their previous selves and that Emma is the child of Snow White and Prince Charming. Emma finds it difficult to believe Henry but agrees things aren't as they appear in Storybrooke.

Season one focuses not only on the present lives of characters in Storybrooke but offers glimpses of their previous selves, including those of Rumplestiltskin, known as Gold in

Storybrooke, and Prince Charming, named David in Storybrooke. It is revealed in Season one that Emma is, in fact, the child of Snow White and Prince Charming, and is indeed the savior of the town of Storybrooke from the Evil Queen's dark curse.

In Season two, Emma breaks Regina's dark curse, which was intended to ensure Snow White could never live happily ever after. Although the townspeople were released from the curse and regained their memories, they were not sent back to their Fairy Tale Land and remained in Storybrooke. Storybrooke in season one was a town without magic and in this season Gold brings magic back to the town. Once again able to wield magic, Regina is able to hold power over the angry townspeople who are trying to get back to their homes in Fairy Tale Land.

Season three begins with people working for Peter Pan kidnapping Henry. Henry believes in the power of magic and fairy tales, which makes him the truest believer. Peter Pan thrives on belief and, in order to survive, he needs to have the heart of the truest believer. Henry's family (see appendix) has to find a way to save him from NeverLand. Once Gold is able to trap his own father, Peter Pan, in Pandora's box, the *heroes* return to Storybrooke with Henry.

Once in Storybrooke, they discover Pan had ripped Henry's shadow from him; Pan was then able to switch bodies with Henry. With Henry trapped in Pandora's box, Pan attempts to enact a curse that will ultimately kill every person in the town of Storybrooke. In order to save the town and his grandson, Gold sacrifices his life. Regina also destroys the original dark curse trigger, leaving Emma and Henry behind in the real world with no memory of Storybrooke or their families. Everyone else returns to Fairy Tale Land and back to his or her life before the original dark curse was enacted.

The Wicked Witch of the West emerges to threaten Fairy Tale Land. Captain Hook goes to New York City to try to get Emma and Henry to return to save the others. Everyone returns to Storybrooke where they have no memory of the previous year spent in Fairy Tale Land or how they got back to Storybrooke. The third season introduces Zelena, the Wicked Witch of the West, who also happens to be the half-sister of Regina. In Zelena's attempt to gain her happily ever after, she curses Storybrooke and ultimately kills Gold's son, Neal, who is Henry's birth father. Gold destroys Zelena and ends up opening another portal, which sends Emma and Captain Hook to Fairy Tale Land. When Emma and Captain Hook return to Storybrooke from Fairy Tale Land, they bring back Maid Marian and another threat, Elsa. Knowledge of the main characters is crucial to understanding the summaries of the first three seasons just detailed. The main characters and their high level narratives are described below.

Character Descriptions

Regina is known as the Evil Queen in Fairy Tale Land and as Mayor Regina Mills in Storybrooke. In Fairy Tale Land, Regina is beautiful and terrifying as the evil queen we know from the classic story of *Snow White*, and this is reflected in her Storybrooke name, which is Italian for "queen." As Snow's cruel stepmother, she holds power with the use of dark magic and is determined to destroy Snow's happiness. The town of Storybrooke changes the stories that we think we know. In contrast to the Evil Queen in Fairy Tale Land, Regina is a loving adoptive mother of Henry in Storybrooke. Although Regina is not known and feared as the Evil Queen in Storybrooke while the curse is active, she does long for a happily ever after of her own. Despite not finding true love until season three, Regina finds unconditional love in the form of her adoptive son, Henry. She even attempts to control her use of dark magic and resists temptations for revenge at his request because, to her, he is her world. As time progresses, Regina eventually

finds true love with Robin Hood and transforms into a hero.

As in the original story, Snow is the fairest of them all with lips red as rose, hair black as coal, and skin as white as snow. Again, she is awakened from the Evil Queen's sleeping curse by her Prince Charming, but here the similarities to Grimm's fairy tale end. Snow cannot escape the wrath of Regina. Once Snow becomes pregnant, she is determined to save her child and goes to Rumplestiltskin to make a deal and gives him the name of her unborn child, which is Emma. Rumplestiltskin tells Snow and Charming that Regina created a powerful curse, a curse that will send everyone from Fairy Tale Land to a place where they will no longer live happily ever after. But, Rumplestiltskin counsels, there is hope. If Snow and Charming can keep their unborn daughter safe from the curse then, in 28 years, she will return to them and they will be able to undo the Evil Queen's curse (About the cast, n.d).

In Storybrooke, Snow is known as Mary Margaret Blanchard, an elementary school teacher. She teaches Regina's son, Henry, and gives him a book of fairy tales with the intention of instilling some hope in him. Once the curse is broken, Snow is reunited with her Charming and daughter, Emma, in Storybrooke. She is determined to do anything to keep her family together. While Snow is known as a pure and good character, she murders Regina's mother, Cora, resulting in the darkening of her heart.

Emma Swan first comes to Storybrooke when the boy she gave up for adoption (Henry) reappears after ten years. Emma is 28 years old, which is the same amount of time the curse has been in place. When she meets Henry, he tells her about the town he is from and that the people who live there are actually fairy tale characters and Emma is their savior. She drives Henry back to town and gets the feeling that some things are not as they truly appear. Eventually, Emma believes, as Henry does and breaks the Evil Queen's dark curse. This results in the townspeople

regaining memories of their previous selves. Emma remains in town and in Henry's life, despite the initial resistance and numerous threats from Regina.

Gold is a man of many dimensions. In Fairy Tale Land, he is known as Rumplestiltskin or the Dark One (the holder of the darkest magic in the realms). In Storybrooke, he is known as Gold, the quasi-owner of the town and the town's pawnshop, which is a nod to Rumplestiltskin's penchant for deals. Gold, in Fairy Tale Land, was the teacher of dark magic to both Regina and her mother, warning that magic always comes with a price. Gold becomes the Dark One after growing tired of being known as a coward, which causes him to lose his loved ones. His once dark and beastly heart warms to his true love, Belle, in Fairy Tale Land and in Storybrooke.

Prince Charming, as he is known in Fairy Tale Land, is known as David in Storybrooke. Always trying to be a hero, his valiant plans crumble next to the Evil Queen's threat after Snow gives birth to their daughter. Charming saves Emma when he places her in a magical cabinet that transports her away from Fairy Tale Land and away from the dark curse. In Storybrooke, David Nolan was known as John Doe while in a coma. When he is awake, he feels drawn to Snow but can't understand why, since he is married to another. After the curse is broken, David's memory is restored and he is reunited with his true love Snow. He stands by Snow and does everything he can to protect the family he once lost.

Henry is the adopted son of Regina, the Evil Queen, and the birth son of Emma, the savior. When he first receives the book of fairy tales from Snow, he realizes the characters in the stories are the true identities of those living in his town of Storybrooke. He even concludes his own mother is the Evil Queen. He tracks down his birth mother, Emma, and brings her back to Storybrooke to break the curse. His belief and heart are so pure; he becomes the target of a villain worse than the Evil Queen in season three. He is a character that connects unlikely

people, like his adoptive mother, Regina, and grandmother, Snow.

Tools for Analysis

Supplied with the background information of the three seasons examined in this thesis and information on the main characters, the three following chapters are divided by themes evident in the narratives of Snow and Regina. Each chapter will describe the theme, the findings associated with the theme, and how specific scenes align with the Scene Function Model. Also discussed will be additional insights and details of the narratives in order to illuminate the significance of the theme regarding the visual communication of evil.

Through the use of the television specific Scene Function Model, I will distinguish portions of Snow and Regina's narratives as kernel or satellite scenes. Determining the kernel and satellite scenes will provide insight into what contributes to the progression of their narratives and their transformations (Porter, et al., 2002). There are six kernel scene functions that follow the traditional narrative models, much like the functions detailed by Propp (1968). Kernel scenes move the story in a linear direction and are vital to the progression of the narrative. If a kernel scene were to be removed, the storyline would then be dramatically altered (Porter, et al., 2002). While not all kernel scenes may be found in a story, a kernel scene could include more than one function, for example, disturbance and confrontation.

The first kernel scene function is *disturbance*. Disturbance reveals the initiating event that upsets the life of the character and leads to the action of the story, or it may serve as establishing the basic conflict of the story. The *obstacle* function is a scene that introduces an opposing force and may reveal the antagonist, or the rival. The *complication* function reveals a new course of action and changes the situation. This scene would include introducing a new character, circumstances, or a new discovery complicating the situation. The *confrontation*

functions as the scene showing the hero confronting an obstacle. The *crisis* scene function is when opposing forces are in conflict and the outcome is uncertain. This is also considered the turning point of the story. The *resolution* scene function is the scene where the result of the crisis is revealed and balance restored, which follows the crisis function in structure (Porter, et al., 2002).

There are twelve satellite scene functions that serve to fill in a gap for the viewer, provide continuity between the scenes, and present information that expands on the story without moving the story along a different path. If the satellite scenes were eliminated, the structure of the narrative would still remain in tact (Porter, et al., 2002). The first of the twelve functions is *exposition*, which presents background information. *Dramatic question* raises the basic question the story will answer and relates to the conflict of the story. *Introduction of a new character* and *action* are scenes introducing a new character and showing the characters as they carry out their plan. The *plan revealed* function presents the hero's goal and *relationship affirmation* focuses on the interaction between or among characters with no new developments or changes in the relationships already revealed. *Clarification* solidifies the dramatic question by clarifying the basic conflict (Porter, et al., 2002).

Conflict continues keeps the audience aware of the basic conflict in the story. *Relief* provides a diversion from the story. The *theme* function can explain why the hero has his or her goals or may explain the character's behavior as well as reflect cultural or social issues, values, or beliefs. The *foreshadowing* function gives later events more significance or creates anticipation for future conflict. The final satellite scene function is *ambiance*, which draws the audience into the story at an emotional level and is usually related to the theme of the story (Porter, et al., 2002). Focus on the kernel scenes will illuminate the importance of progressing

the characters' narratives along and reveal critical information pertaining to the characters' transformations toward or from evil.

In addition to the identification of kernel scenes, I will complete a rhetorical analysis of visuals in specific scenes. The addition of visual rhetoric analysis helps demonstrate the characters' transformations toward and away from evil not just in their narrative structure but visually as well.

The following thesis discussion chapters are organized by theme, as discovered during the analysis of the television series *OUAT*. The criterion for selecting the three themes included examining the kernel scenes to determine which themes progressed the overall narrative of the series as well as the individual narratives of Snow and Regina. While the theme of True Love is typical to the written tale of *Snow White* and the animated film, the themes of Motherhood and Revenge are unique to this television adaptation.

The first chapter will detail the theme of Revenge through a close reading of the narratives of Snow and Regina and rhetorical analysis of visuals in specific scenes in order to uncover insights about the communication of transformations of evil. The second chapter will describe the narratives through the theme of True Love, following the same format and organization of the chapter on revenge. The final discussion chapter is organized around the theme of Motherhood. This theme will be analyzed in the same fashion as the previous chapters.

Television consumers construct or shape their views based on the consistent bombardment of information presented through television, thus making television a source of values, ideologies, and perspectives (Gerbner, 1998; Norden, 2000; Goodall, 2012). Television series serve as ways of telling stories or describing popular culture. Characters' transformations

toward or away from evil and its meanings are communicated through the themes revealed in Snow and Regina's narratives.

Television meanings are not restricted to just television, they are cultural and are used to make sense of our social experience (Fiske, 1985). Being in love, being a parent, and wanting revenge are considered common social experiences. The three themes are strongly connected with the narratives of both Snow and Regina and contribute valuable insight on the communication of evil in the series, although each theme can be applied and analyzed in other main characters' narratives as well. While True Love is key to the popularized versions of the fairy tale, the themes of Revenge and Motherhood set this television adaptation apart. Specific emphasis is placed on the kernel scenes of the narratives that perpetuate or cause the shift in evil as well as rhetorical analysis of the visual depictions of transformations toward or away from evil.

CHAPTER FIVE

REVENGE

“Revenge is a dark and lonely road, once you go down it, there is no turning back”

(Henry Sr., *The Thing You Love Most*).

Revenge is defined as “to avenge usually by retaliating in kind or degree” and “to inflict injury in return for” something (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This definition was used to determine which portions of the stories indicated a desire for revenge, which is a common theme in the narratives of both Snow and Regina. For instance, Regina is set on destroying Snow’s happiness because of something Snow did as a child. Contrary to the well-known tale of *Snow White*, Regina’s hatred of Snow has nothing to do with jealousy or vanity. In the written tale and animated film, the Evil Queen is determined to kill Snow White so she, the Evil Queen, may remain the fairest one of all. Her motive is out of vanity and jealousy over a young child who is considered fairer than she. The series *OUAT* rejects those reasons and provides an alternative over the course of the series. The cause of Regina’s thirst for vengeance has to do with Snow telling a secret that results in a great loss. Snow, on the other hand, most often viewed as pure and good, is determined to avenge the death of a friend and to regain her kingdom, no matter what it takes.

The characters’ narratives not only explain their desire for revenge but also function as kernel scenes. Kernel scenes move the story in a linear direction and are vital to the progression of the narrative. The storyline would be changed without the kernel scenes (Porter, et al., 2002). Of the six functions of kernel scenes, three are relevant to the theme of Revenge: *disturbance*, *obstacle* and *complication*. The functions were defined and described in the previous chapter. The kernel scene functions are discussed below in relation to the theme of Revenge specifically.

Snow's transformation toward evil is revealed through kernel scenes. Snow becomes focused on revenge after Regina kills her father and assumes the throne in place of Snow resulting in Snow not only losing her father but her kingdom as well. Other evidence of her transformation toward evil is after Regina's mother, Cora, murders Snow's dear friend. Snow is seen trying to figure out how to stop the suffering and deaths of others, with her conclusion being murder. Regina and Cora are the two people preventing Snow from rightfully ascending the throne and from living happily ever after. Snow's plans for her revenge contribute to her transformation.

Regina's reasons for her revenge are revealed through several kernel scenes. After the loss of her true love because of Snow, Regina is consumed with revenge. She not only murders entire villages of people for hiding Snow, but she enacts a dark curse to ensure Snow does not have her happily ever after. For Regina, happiness is tied to Snow's death or Snow's unhappiness. Regina's shift towards evil is evident after the savior from the curse, and birth mother of her adoptive son, arrives in Storybrooke.

Disturbance (Porter, et al., 2002) functions as the scene that reveals the basic conflict of the story. Regarding both Snow and Regina, the scenes considered as disturbance are the ones that detail the reason behind Regina's vengefulness, as well as Snow's anger towards Regina. Cora tricked Snow into betraying Regina's secret: her love for the stable boy. Furious with Regina's disobedience, Cora ripped out the young man's heart, killing him in front of Regina. Although Cora was the one who killed her love, Regina blames Snow for his death. Regina set out on a path to master dark magic and enact curses meant to destroy Snow's happiness.

Regina: I have to do something. I can't keep living like this. What Snow

did to me, took from me. It's eating me alive, Daddy. Her very existence mocks me; she must be punished. (*The Thing You Love Most*)

The dark curse requires its caster to kill the thing they love most. Although her father was her closest ally, in order to enact the dark curse, Regina chose revenge over love. She ripped out her own father's heart, killing him, to cast the curse to destroy Snow's happily ever after.

Snow, angry at the loss of her kingdom and being accused of being both a thief and murderer, sees no other way to gain back her kingdom than by killing Regina. In another instance, Snow determines the only way to keep people from being hurt or killed is to kill Cora herself.

Snow: I don't care about justice anymore. We keep thinking people will change,
What if that's wrong? What if I'm the one that has to change?

Charming: Change how?

Snow: I'm going to kill Cora. (*The Queen is Dead*)

This exchange between Snow and Charming demonstrates Snow's rationale for her vengeance. To her, the only way to save the lives of others is to take a life herself, which goes against her commonly attributed character traits.

The *Obstacle* functions as the scene that introduces an opposing force (Porter, et al., 2002). The scenes within the Revenge narratives of Snow and Regina clearly demonstrate and delineate each other as opposing forces. The only thing standing in Regina's path to victory and happiness is Snow being alive. In another storyline, Emma Swan stands in the way of Regina's dark curse remaining in tact. Emma also threatens the relationship between Regina and her adopted son, Henry. For Snow, the one person standing in the path of ruling her rightful kingdom and living happily ever after is Regina.

The *Complication* function is a scene revealing a new course of action and complicates the situation (Porter, et al., 2002). Within the theme of Revenge in their narratives, complication scenes include Emma coming back to Storybrooke, thus breaking Regina's dark curse. Another example is when Regina has to undo her curse in Storybrooke in season three, transporting every character besides Emma and Henry back to Fairy Tale Land. Without the scenes just discussed, the overall story would not progress as intended. After all, it is because of Snow and Regina's relationship that a dark curse was enacted and Storybrooke created.

Several kernel scenes feature the characters shifting towards or away from evil, further illustrating the characters' fluid relationship with evil in *OUAT*. Revenge is a main contributor to the shift of being considered evil or depicted as evil both in narrative and visually. The perpetuation of evil is communicated through a motive to inflict pain or to avenge an act. Regina's focus on destroying Snow's happiness drives her to enact a dark curse, erasing all of Snow's memories of being happy. The dark curse trapped everyone from Fairy Tale Land in Storybrooke with no recollection of who they truly are. A lust for revenge transformed Regina from a woman who once saved Snow's life to one that learns dark magic in order to take away her enemy's happiness.

Regina fulfills the archetypal character of the Evil Queen and her motives for revenge are generally acceptable for a villainous character. Snow, on the other hand, is regarded as a pure-hearted hero. There is a distinct transformation when she becomes consumed by revenge. She shifts toward evil when she plans to kill Regina and when she curses Cora's heart. Despite conducting these evil actions, characters like Charming encourage Snow to remain good and dismiss her vengeful plans as not being a reflection of who Snow truly is.

Charming: Because you wouldn't be able to live with yourself. You have the purest heart of anyone I have ever known. That's who you are, and that's who you're going to stay. (*The Miller's Daughter*)

This movement toward becoming evil is not only demonstrated by Snow's plans to kill Regina and Cora but also as an actual spot of her heart turning black. This dark spot signifies Snow's shift toward darkness.

The Revenge theme is indicated not only in the structure and progression of Snow and Regina's narratives but is revealed visually as well. Rhetorical analysis of visuals in the show, or symbols that visually influence the way one perceives and receives what is being communicated, is used to uncover nonverbal and visual cues of the characters transforming to and from evil. These visual cues include actions and behaviors as well as the characters' style.

The scenes are analyzed below based on this form of communication. Visual rhetoric can be expressed through hair and makeup, costume, facial expressions, posture, body language, lighting and colors. Motives for revenge in the characters' narratives discussed earlier add to the understanding of the visual picture being presented to the audience about the characters and their transformations.

Regina threatens Snow and Charming at their wedding. Consumed with revenge, Regina lets Snow know that her happiness will be taken from her.

Regina: You've made your vows, now I make mine. Soon, everything you love will be taken away. Out of your suffering will rise my victory. I shall destroy your happiness if it's the last thing I do. (*Pilot*)

Illustration 5.1 Regina, *Pilot*Illustration 5.2 Snow and Charming, *Pilot*

The screen stills above show one of several interactions between Regina and Snow. Snow has just found David gravely injured by Regina's guards who were searching for Snow and Charming's newly born child, Emma. Regina, wearing black clothing with red feathers in her hair and on her cape, makes her dislike for Snow clear not just through her words but also through her facial expressions, costume, and posture. As Snow cradles David, Regina soothes Snow by saying, "don't worry, you won't even remember you knew or loved him...because this is my happy ending" (*Pilot*). Regina's villainy is evident not only in her title as the Evil Queen but also in her clothing when compared to Snow. Snow is wearing all white and a loose hairstyle. Regina's hair is pulled tight and decorated with feathers, possibly implying the destruction of Snow because in the animated movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Snow is able to speak with and cares for birds.

In *OUAT*, Snow is wearing light makeup compared to Regina's dark lips and heavily lined eyes. The lighting in the scene is dark and shadowed. Regina assumes an overbearing posture by standing over Snow and Charming when delivering her threat to destroy Snow's happiness.



Illustration 5.3 Regina, Snow, and Charming, *Pilot*

The scene above is when the dark curse begins to consume the castle to take everyone to the new world of Storybrooke. This shot is especially telling of the opposites Regina and Snow embody in this episode. Regina is wearing a fitted black outfit, standing tall, and laughing as the dark smoke smashes through the windows and swirls around them. Snow, wearing a loosely fitted white dress, is crouched, frightened, leaning over her Charming and turned away from Regina's smile. This scene makes very clear to the viewer who the Evil Queen is and who the "victims" of her revenge are. The lighting in this scene is especially dark evoking a feeling that any hope Snow and Charming had is destroyed.

In addition to a character's expression or costumes, mise en scene, especially props, can convey elements of the character's identity to the audience. Apples play as big a role in the series as they did in the written story and animated tale. Apples act as a visual cue to the viewer that Regina is the Evil Queen, no matter what disguise or role she plays – including that of a mother or mayor.

A television character can be considered evil whether they are plotting a murder or actually committing one. Motives and actions are important to understanding revenge and for how the varying degrees of evilness are being communicated. For Regina, her vengeful actions support her as the villain or evil character. Snow also commits evil acts -- from stealing, to cheating with a married man, to murder; yet she is still perceived by the other characters as a pure and good person who is only acting out of character. Snow's reasons for revenge are not questioned; essentially they are excused because she either drank a potion or because she attempted to warn Regina about the curse she placed on Cora's heart, resulting in Cora's death.

Another aspect of revenge revealed in the narratives is power. When power is associated with characters, there is more likely to be an instance of or motivation for revenge. When Snow assumes her rightful throne, she plans to banish Regina out of anger. Snow blames Regina for being forced to live in hiding in the forest and marked as a thief prior to regaining her kingdom. As both mayor and Queen, Regina makes no excuses for trying to ensure that Snow's happiness is destroyed.

Selfishness is also a contributor to revenge and a shift towards evil, like power. Regina is focused only on her own victory and happiness in Fairy Tale Land. She has no regard for the others living there as long as she can take away Snow's happiness. Snow becomes so consumed with her anger at losing her Charming that she takes a potion to remove her memories. With her memories erased, her ability to love is also gone; this changes her into an angry and horrible person. Love is consistently considered weakness when a character is consumed with darkness.

Grumpy: Snow. Wait. Where are you going?

Snow: To kill the Queen. (*Heart of Darkness*)

The quote from Snow about killing Regina is stated several times in that episode. This not only indicates the clear intention of Snow's actions for Regina but also confirms the level of spite she holds for Regina. The below screen grab shows a very different Snow from the above photo with Charming.



Illustration 5.4 Snow, *Heart of Darkness*

Snow is no longer in a white dress or wearing her hair down or with flowers. She is wearing a dark green cloak, darker makeup drawing attention to her eyes, as well as a darker shade of lipstick. Also of note is Snow's skill in archery; she never misses her target. Her eyes are locked on the Queen; therefore she is unable to see Charming jump in front of the arrow. Snow is wearing gloves, unusual for her character, which might imply this is a different Snow than the person other characters know and respect. She is also shown wearing gloves when she attempts to steal from a carriage during her time spent in hiding.

Regina, in another effort to destroy Snow, plans to use Charming to lure Snow to her end. Snow has known for a while why Regina has so much ill will toward her, confirming to Charming that she destroyed Regina's happiness and so Regina wants to do the same to her. Regina gets Snow to meet her at the very same spot she previously saved Snow from a runaway

horse many years earlier. When Snow sees the grave on the hill, she sees it is the same stable boy that Regina had loved. Snow realizes that he didn't run away as Regina had always told her.

Regina: But he died because of you...she ripped his heart out because of you.

Because you couldn't listen to me

Snow: You took my father. Haven't we both suffered enough?

Regina disagrees and pulls out a red apple asking,

Regina: Did you know apples stand for health and wisdom?

Snow: So, why do I get the feeling that one might kill me? (*An Apple Red as Blood*)

This apple is not ordinary, it is a poisoned apple that must be eaten out of free will. It will not kill Snow but will make Snow's body her tomb. Snow takes the apple to save Charming.

Snow: Then, congratulations. You've won.

Snow takes bite and collapses on the ground releasing the apple as Regina stands over her lifeless body, proud over her success of finally taking away Snow's happy ending.



Illustration 5.5 Regina and Snow White, *An Apple Red as Blood*



Illustration 5.6 Regina and young Snow, *The Stable Boy*

The top screen shot is most aligned to the written and animated film versions of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. This scene is also probably the most recognized from this fairy tale – Snow taking a bite from a poisoned apple – in addition to the true love’s kiss between Snow White and Prince Charming in the animated film. The lower screen shot is from a different episode but portrays the first meeting between Regina and Snow. As the transformation for Regina to Evil Queen is described in the narrative, the transformation is clear visually as well, especially when comparing the two screen shots.

In the first screen shot, Regina wears a dark colored dress with sharp angles in the collar and neckline with her hair tightly pulled back and with intense makeup. Regina appears in a powerful stance with her head up, arms to her side and shoulders back while looking at Snow’s lifeless body. Her spite for Snow is evident as she smiles after Snow takes a bite from the poisoned apple and collapses. Snow, in contrast to the dark clothing worn by Regina, is wearing a white shirt and light colored fur vest. Her hair is loose and down and she is wearing soft, natural makeup. She is in an extremely submissive position while shown unconscious and ultimately trapped in her body as a tomb. Although Regina does not kill Snow with the apple,

only entrapping Snow within her own body, it is enough to give Regina a sense of victory. This feeling is demonstrated with a crooked smile as she stands in the same field where they first met.

The next screen shot, despite being from a different episode, occurs in the same location. Regina, while meeting with the stable boy, hears the screams of a young girl and sees a horse running through the field. As a skilled rider, Regina rides on her horse to save the little girl. This young girl is Princess Snow White. Snow is wearing a light colored outfit with the loose hairstyle she commonly wears when she is older. Regina, on the other hand, is quite a contrast to her “present” self in Fairy Tale Land. Wearing a light blue riding jacket with a white shirt, light makeup and braided ponytail, Regina is almost unrecognizable. In addition to her outfit, Regina smiles at and soothes Snow after saving her life. Regina is shown standing close to Snow and bending down to Snow’s eye level.

As the characters transform, there is visual evidence to demonstrate their conversion toward evil. With a focus on the theme of Revenge, evil is communicated through dark colors and clothing, as well as harsh makeup. In addition to costume and makeup, the lighting is sharper or darker. Interactions between characters are tense, and this tension is visually communicated through facial expressions as well as posture. Snow White, when angry, furrows her brow and raises her voice, contrasting to her usual speech and facial expressions.

Regina has the most visual transformation. Starting with a pale blue jacket, braided hair, a smile and soft makeup before her true love was killed, Regina gradually darkens her clothing. This is shown through several scenes in her life before the curse is enacted. As her smile and energy fade, her dress colors shift to navy and black. By the end of her transformation, Regina wears black pant suits, capes, form fitted dresses (which are unusual for most female characters on the series), tight ponytails and dark makeup, bringing focus to her eyes and lips.

Regina: Perhaps. I've always believed evil isn't born, its made

Charming: All due respect Regina, I don't think you know much about evil...

Regina: You're very sweet David, but you're also wrong. Evil doesn't always look evil. Sometimes it's staring right at us, and we don't even realize it.

(Heart of Darkness)

This exchange between Regina and Charming in Storybrooke before the dark curse was broken illuminates the theme of Revenge contributing to the transformation toward evil. Evil is made from the circumstances and experiences of Regina and Snow and evil does not always look evil. Regina as the Evil Queen appears in dark clothing and harsh makeup, which might imply her wickedness, but as a conservatively dressed mayor in Storybrooke, Regina does not appear evil. The same applies to Snow when she commits acts of revenge or plans to commit murder, she still appears as good even while giving threats when dressed in her white wedding dress.

What is most evident in the Revenge narratives of Snow and Regina is that their motivations are fueled by loss. Loss takes shape in several ways for both Snow and Regina. Regina's thirst for revenge begins after losing the love of her life, and grows stronger after the death of her mother. Regina is vengeful when she is threatened with the loss of power and most of all, with the potential loss of her son, which will be further detailed in the Motherhood chapter.

Snow becomes consumed with a desire for revenge after the loss of her kingdom. Her need for vengeance is amplified after escaping the huntsman, who was ordered by Regina to remove Snow's heart. Her solution to taking her kingdom back is exacting revenge and killing Regina, although her plans do not succeed. Another loss felt by Snow was after Regina's

mother, Cora, killed her dear friend. This set Snow down the path of cursing Cora's heart, which ultimately kills Cora once Regina places the heart back in Cora's body.

Revenge serves as a reason for committing evil acts and it serves as motivation to inflict pain or suffering onto others as a result of something else. Revenge affects Snow and Regina in similar ways. The characters shift toward darkness, not only visually but also toward committing acts from which there is no turning back – murder. This bloodlust consumes both characters at several points in the three seasons. For Regina, most of her vengeful acts are a reaction to something Snow did or does. For Snow, her desire for revenge is perpetuated primarily by Regina and also by Regina's mother, Cora.

Overall, the results of the characters' planned vengeful acts do not meet success, with the exceptions of Regina originally enacting the dark curse bringing everyone to Storybrooke, and Snow being responsible for Cora's death. The effects of Regina's revenge have included losing her son's trust, as well as the town of Storybrooke's faith in her ability to change for good. Snow's thirst for revenge resulted in her heart developing a dark spot, tarnishing her pureness. Regina finds love with Robin Hood but is faced with yet another loss of love when Emma returns to Storybrooke from Fairy Tale Land with Robin Hood's wife. Regina visibly is heartbroken as she loses another love and this time at the hands of Snow's daughter, Emma.

Revenge is a common theme in both Snow's and Regina's narratives both in structure and action as well as visually. Regina's narrative shows more scenarios of revenge, presumably due to being classified as the Evil Queen. What is interesting is that Snow, the pure and good character, is shown only shifting towards evil when she forgets her memories, or after a close friend is killed. She is just as focused on revenge as Regina, although her actions are explained away or accepted over Regina's. Regina occasionally shifts her revenge toward other characters,

but primarily, her revenge is aimed at Snow. Regina, who is unable to forgive Snow, is consumed with vengeance after the loss of her love and her thirst for revenge recurs after Snow kills Regina's mother. The scenes analyzed based on visual rhetoric support the visual method of communicating the transformations of evil in the characters, as well as the constant evolution of how evil characters are depicted.

Are you still a good person if you kill another or attempt to kill another because of the pain and misery they inflicted on you or others? How is it that Snow White is still viewed as a hero and a good character when she can feel and act the same way as Regina, yet Regina is labeled as the Evil Queen? Regardless of how the other characters and, perhaps, the viewers interpret these characters, a textual analysis of the show demonstrates the similarities in the transformations of evil and how it is communicated visually and in narrative structure while questioning the previously drawn boundaries on how evil is portrayed in a television series.

The desire for revenge is at the core of both Snow and Regina's narratives. Both characters react to loss by setting out to destroy the other's happiness or power. The nature of the revenge that they pursue is evident in their actions detailed in the kernel scenes. Additionally, their shifting relationship with evil can be seen visually through colors, costumes, lighting, make up and nonverbal communication. Revenge is demonstrated through power and selfishness, as well as through darker colors, harsher makeup, louder speech and costume. The characters' motives for revenge are often extinguished when true love or goodness prevails. Another theme evident and affecting the transformations of evil communicated through the narratives of Snow and Regina is True Love, which is detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

TRUE LOVE

“You found me.”

“I will always find you.” (Snow White and Charming, *Pilot*)

True love is defined as “love that is strong and lasting” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The analysis of the narratives of Snow and Regina in this chapter uses that definition to determine which portions of their stories describe true love. True Love is another absolute category of traditional fairy tale tropes. While the previous chapter described shifts toward evil, this research examines the bigger picture of the characters’ fluid relationship with evil so there is focus not only on transformations toward evil but transformations away from evil. Because of the focus on the larger picture of evil fluidity, themes and motivations contributing to a character change to and from evil are examined. Revenge is a clear contributor to a shift toward evil. True Love proves to be a shift away from evil in the narratives of Snow and Regina.

The theme of True Love is evident in the narratives of Snow and Regina and affects their transformations of evil in the series. For example, Regina, despite being an Evil Queen, is able to experience true love with Robin Hood (yes, that Robin Hood, the Prince of Thieves). Evident almost immediately is that Regina’s thirst for vengeance diminishes when her character gives into love. The same feeling of love she previously considered as weakness when she was consumed with revenge. Her happiness introduces the visual and narrative transformation from a villain towards a hero. Snow’s true love with Prince Charming is as well-known to audiences as the relationship between Snow and the Evil Queen. Love proves to be more powerful in the narratives of Snow and Regina due to the threat love poses to all dark magic and evil curses because, “love is the most powerful potion” (Gold, *Heart of Darkness*).

The characters' narratives not only reveal the impact of True Love, but also contain kernel scenes. As previously mentioned, kernel scenes are what progress the story lines along (Porter, et al., 2002). Of the six functions of kernel scenes, the theme of True Love and its storylines can be applied to three. The *complication*, *crisis* and *resolution* kernel scenes are discussed below in relation to the theme of True Love.

Snow's transformation from evil is evident in several kernel scenes, which demonstrates that she is able to move away from evil because of true love. Snow's story involving true love keeps her from completely turning towards darkness. Charming and Snow have the most powerful magic of all in the form of their true love. Their love is what saves them from Regina's dark curse in the form of their daughter and also breaks the curse from the poisoned apple with true love's kiss. When Snow is in love, she is able to resist becoming evil.

Regina's transformation into a hero and away from a villain is also the result of true love. Her story shifts to include happiness not from enacting revenge but from experiencing true love with Robin Hood. With each kernel scene, Regina's narrative progresses towards happiness and away from evil and more so when her love grows for Robin.

Scenes serving the *Complication* function reveal a new course of action in the narrative. Within the theme of True Love in their narratives, complication scenes include Regina meeting Robin Hood. They first meet while looking for Zelena, the Wicked Witch of the West. Regina and Robin show an instant connection while bantering back and forth. Robin is not frightened or scared of Regina, whom he recognizes as the Evil Queen from Fairy Tale Land. This interaction between Regina and Robin reveals a new course of action through the initial attraction. Robin offers to be Regina's partner in the search for Zelena, which Regina never asked for but comes to

accept. This scene of attraction complicates the situation after they share a smile. Robin might become a distraction to Regina, who is focused on finding her stepsister, Zelena.

Emma and Captain Hook end up bringing back Robin Hood's wife, Maid Marian, to Storybrooke when they return from Fairy Tale Land. Her return complicates the situation of Robin and Regina's relationship. Maid Marian's return sets up a new course of action with Robin feeling obligated to return to his wife thus leaving Regina behind. Another complication scene is when Snow falls under the sleeping curse after taking a bite from the poisoned apple. This reveals a new course of action with Charming finding Snow and waking her from the sleeping curse, which complicates Regina's initial plan of destroying Snow's happiness with an apple.

Without these scenes, the overall series narrative would not continue to move in a linear fashion. After all, it was because of Snow and Charming's powerful love that their child, Emma, is the savior of Storybrooke. Without experiencing true love, Regina's transformations into and away from evil would not be as critical to the progression of the series.

Crisis scenes that demonstrate an uncertain outcome between opposing forces might not immediately register as falling under the theme of True Love, but without conflict, there is no proof of a lasting love. It is when conflict arises that the characters' love grows stronger and more powerful. Snow and Charming in the first season do not know who they are, but somehow they are always drawn to one another, so much so that they even engage in an affair when Charming is married to another in the realm of Storybrooke. This conflict of opposing forces, like what is morally right and wrong, and not knowing who they truly are leads to the uncertain outcome of whether they can remember one another.

Another example of a crisis function scene is when Regina realizes it is Emma who is responsible for bringing back Maid Marian to Storybrooke. This scene also serves as the

complication function. Regina's happiness is unfortunately dependent on being in love with Robin Hood. After Marian, Robin's wife, returns to Storybrooke, Regina faces the struggle of letting Robin go back to his wife or of convincing him to stay with her. If Robin returns to Marian, it is uncertain what will happen to Regina and her determination to remain on the good side when she loses her love, yet again.

Resolution scenes reveal the results of a crisis, thus restoring balance. It is clear Snow and Charming did not have their memories as a result of Regina's dark curse. Their memories are restored once their daughter, a product of true love, breaks the dark curse. With the curse broken, Snow and Charming are able to return to one another and live out their fairy tale.

The scenes discussed are the kernel scenes of Snow and Regina's narratives and present the characters' paths of turning away from evil and darkness. True Love serves as motivation to remain good or to redeem oneself after evil actions. True Love is one of the causes of the shift away from being considered evil or depicted as evil. This is clear in Regina's change of behavior once she finds love and happiness with Robin Hood, as well as when she tries to redeem herself, thus transforming into a hero. Another example is in Snow's actions after her true love with Charming is revealed. When Snow drinks a potion to forget Charming she also loses the ability to love – changing her into a mean and hateful character out for Regina's head. It is because of Charming and their true love that he jumps in front of an arrow Snow meant for Regina, and saves Snow from turning as evil as the one she was trying to kill. Once again it is with true love's kiss that Charming saves Snow and she returns to the pure and good person she was before.

When Regina gives Snow a sleeping curse, the only remedy is true love's kiss. After searching for Snow, Charming finds her in a glass coffin, lifts the lid and with a kiss, brings life

and light to Snow and to Fairy Tale Land. It is their true love that conquers the sleeping curse and forgetting potion. Snow fulfills the archetypal character of the fairy tale princess along with her true love, Prince Charming. Regina, in contrast, is only considered good when she is in love. This contradiction demonstrates the significant role happiness holds for a character in order to resist darkness.

In addition to True Love being revealed in the narratives, it also demonstrates a shift away from evil visually as well. Four specific scenes are analyzed below based on visual communication. The movement away from evil through True Love is discussed through hair and makeup, costume, facial expressions, posture, body language, lighting and colors. These visual and verbal cues contribute to the determination of whether a character is changing.



Illustration 6.1 Daniel and Regina, *The Stable Boy*

Although lighting in this scene is darker than some others, Regina is immediately visually different from her typical presentation as the Evil Queen. This is because the scene occurs before Regina becomes the Evil Queen. This scene also demonstrates visually the transformative powers of evil in the characters. Regina is with her first true love, Daniel, the stable boy. Earlier, she had snapped at him for interrupting a conversation between Regina and her mother.

In this scene, her behavior is friendly and apologetic. She is wearing light-colored clothing, including a blue riding jacket and white shirt. Her makeup is soft and natural as well as her smile. She is shown smiling, flirting and kissing Daniel. She maintains eye contact and this eye contact is noticeably friendlier than her usual interactions with other characters. Her eyes are open and bright, possibly reflecting the hope and happiness she has when she is with Daniel.



Illustration 6.2 Robin Hood and Regina, *Bleeding Through*

This scene reveals the moment Robin and Regina share their first kiss. Robin knows deep down that Regina is not the Evil Queen, even though that it is her reputation and previous title. He sees goodness in her. She allows herself to feel and is confident enough to express her emotions first, not waiting for someone else to save or kiss her. The lighting is dark due to this scene occurring at night. Regina is wearing brighter clothes than usual, including a light gold shirt. Her usual Storybrooke outfits consist of purple, black, navy, and gray so light gold is a noticeable change in apparel. Regina kisses him first with the light of the fire illuminating their faces, adding a softness to the intensity of their feelings for one another. Like Regina said in season one,

Regina: Love, true love, is magic. And not just any magic - the most powerful magic of all. It creates happiness. (*Stable Boy*)

The happiness from love makes a very different Regina from the Evil Queen version who viewed love as weakness and not as powerful. In Fairy Tale Land it is known to all who use magic and those who don't that love, true love, is most powerful.



Illustration 6.3 Snow and Charming, *Pilot*

The screen shot above is the moment Charming kisses Snow, which then wakes her from the sleeping curse. Snow is wearing white with flowers placed in her hair. The lighting in the scene is bright with little shading; despite this being the somber scene where Charming finds his love in a glass coffin. While this scene shows the kiss, there is little conversation between Snow and Charming. When Snow wakes, a burst of color goes over her body and across the land. Her first words to Charming are “you found me” (*Pilot*). This scene demonstrates what Daniel told Regina, it portrays true love powerful enough to overcome the apple’s sleeping curse.

Daniel: True love is the most powerful magic of all. It can overcome anything. (*The Stable Boy*)

Another moment of True Love proving to be the most powerful magic of all occurs before the curse is broken. While Charming is in a coma, Snow volunteers at the hospital to read to patients. Emma suggests Snow read to Charming to prove to Henry that believing the townspeople are actual fairy tale characters is ridiculous. When Snow is reading the tale of *Snow White* to Charming he places his hand on hers while in a coma. True love, as Daniel said, can overcome anything, even in a coma and in the town of Storybrooke.



Illustration 6.4 Snow and Charming, *Pilot*

This is the scene of the wedding of Snow and Charming. In this scene, they are surrounded by their kingdom and bathed in colorful and bright light while they exchange their vows. Again, Snow is wearing a white dress with flowers in her hair, loosely pulled back. Through their smiles and posture, there is a sense of ease demonstrating the level of comfort and happiness they have in each other's presence. Reciprocating smiles not only expresses a level of happiness, but also provides a visual cue that there is sincerity and no hidden malice behind them.

True Love is considered the most powerful magic of all in *OUAT*. Although previously considered as weakness by Regina, she finds a renewed confidence and power when in love with

Robin Hood. Happiness becomes more important than revenge to Regina. A noticeable character shift toward evil occurs when Regina, once again, loses her love, Robin, to his wife. A brief flicker of anger and loss is apparent in Regina's reaction to finding out Emma was the one responsible for bringing Marian to Storybrooke. There is visual evidence accompanying the narratives to indicate the characters' transformations away from evil.

With a focus on True Love, shifts from evil are communicated through light-colored clothes, soft features, mutual eye contact, and smiles. The theme of True Love seems consistent with continuing the Hollywood portrayal of love. In addition to changes in costume color and natural makeup, the lighting is soft. This softness is also communicated through facial expressions and vocal tone. Regina, again, is the most visual in her transformation, and this time away from evil. When she meets Robin, her apparel gets lighter-colored. She is shown struggling to let her emotions and heart take over, and when she does, she is happier both visually and in her narrative. Happiness is demonstrated through Regina's tone of voice, smiling and ability to show kindness to others, which is then noticed by the other characters.

Evident in the True Love narratives of Snow and Regina is that their motivations and actions are fueled by happiness. Happiness takes shape in several ways for Snow and Regina. When Regina finds love with Daniel, she acts almost child-like with her smiles and her dreams of running away to marry a stable boy. When she adopts Henry, which will be detailed in the next chapter, and when she meets and falls in love with Robin Hood, Regina changes – visually as well as in her narrative path. Snow only has one true love and that is Charming. They both seem to know where to find each other, proving the power of love. For example, Snow somehow knows where to find Charming when he wakes from his coma and goes to the toll bridge of Storybrooke, reminiscent of the troll bridge in their story in the book of fairy tales.

While Charming has saved Snow several times with a kiss, Snow also assumes the role of savior for Charming. After Charming killed the Queen's knights who were trying to capture Snow, he faces trouble with the bridge trolls. Snow saves him from the trolls. The clearest example of True Love and sacrifice is when Snow risks her life to save Charming's and takes a bite from Regina's poisoned apple. Their love story continues, season after season. Regina's love story is filled with both loss and hope. True Love continues to defeat evil; it procures happiness and hope powerful enough to overcome any evil or dark magic.

True Love affects Snow and Regina in similar ways. The characters themselves shift away from evil by committing acts of redemption or sacrifice proving their selflessness. In several instances, Snow or Regina risks her life for another. True love is revealed at several points in the three seasons analyzed. For Regina, most of her redeeming actions are result of being in love and happy. For Snow, true love is most powerful. The biggest villain of the series, the Dark One, covets true love because of its power. True Love is a constant source of magic, which defeats any curse. Regina not only becomes happy because of true love, but she also transforms into a hero. Snow and Charming's true love causes the constant defeat of dark magic.

Snow's narrative is primarily centered on her and Charming's love, which is the common Disney fairy tale princess trope. Of interest is that Regina, the Evil Queen, is shown as changing into a hero when she opens her heart and falls in love. She is shown as being just as good a character as Snow when true love is present in her life, which she shows by proving she is selfless. When Regina is able to love, other characters acknowledge she has changed, accept her as good and no longer as the Evil Queen. Regina experiences love with a couple of characters in the three seasons, while Snow only loves one.

The scenes analyzed demonstrate the communication of transformations from evil in the characters as well as the constant evolution of what constitutes an evil character. Is true love the only reason for a change toward goodness? Do sacrifice and selfless acts help characters shift away from evil? True love in the series is a matter of sacrifice but also of happiness. True Love is demonstrated when characters are selfless and focus on the wellbeing of another character other than themselves. This shift toward good and away from evil is evident not only in the actions and functions of kernel scenes, which progress the narratives, but visually through colors, costumes, soft makeup and facial expressions. The characters, their stories, and actions are transformed when True Love is present. True Love is an unconditional and sacrificial love, much like the love of a parent. The final theme evident and affecting the transformations of evil as communicated through the series is Motherhood.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MOTHERHOOD

“You’re not a villain. You’re my mom” (Henry, *Going Home*).

Mother is defined as “a female parent” and “maternal tenderness or affection” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). According to Danuta Walters and Harrison (2014), the term mother is “so overdetermined that a singular hegemonic trope rarely emerges, although there have certainly been historical moments...when the power of the dominant produces a more singular frame...that coheres all too well with normative understandings of women more generally” (p. 39). The Merriam-Webster definition of mother as well as the traditional notion of a nurturing mother is used in the analysis of the narratives of Snow and Regina and which portions of the characters’ stories embody the theme of motherhood, which is present in both characters’ narratives.

For instance, Regina is not only the stepmother of Snow in Fairy Tale Land; she is also the adoptive mother of Henry in Storybrooke. Regina rejects the initially held notion of “the single mother [that] has generally been viewed by the general public as being the worst form of motherhood available for women and for her children” (Nagy, 2010, p. 10). Contrary to the well-known written fairy tale of *Snow White*, which ends with a wedding, Snow has two children in the series. There are limited scenes demonstrating the “motherly” relationship of Regina as Snow’s stepmother. This aspect of their narratives will not be analyzed because the central focus of their relationship in the series is when Regina is viewed as the Evil Queen and not as the wicked stepmother.

The characters’ narratives not only explain how motherhood affects their transformations, or lack of, but also contribute several kernel scenes. As previously mentioned, kernel scenes

progress the story along and are essential to this movement, thus demonstrating how scenes advance or enhance the narrative. Of the six functions of kernel scenes, the theme of Motherhood and its storylines can be applied to three. The *obstacle*, *complication* and *crisis* kernel scenes are discussed below in relation to the theme of Motherhood. Again, it is possible for the same scene to include more than one function.

Snow's movement away from being an evil character continues in her kernel scenes depicting motherhood. As a mother, Snow's narrative advances and reveals the obstacles she overcame to become a nurturing mother to her children, including how she saves one child from Regina's dark curse and her other child from the Wicked Witch of the West. Regina's shift from evil is revealed in several kernel scenes, demonstrating the progression of her narrative. Regina overcomes the return of her adoptive son's birth mother. She shifts to becoming completely selfless when deactivating her dark curse. Deactivating the curse trigger will ultimately separate her from her son but also ensures his safety. Regina continues to move away from evil as a result of becoming a nurturing and selfless mother to Henry.

The *obstacle* scenes always introduce an opposition. The kernel scenes of Snow and Regina's motherhood narratives demonstrate opposing forces that create a hurdle for each character. Regina is the obstacle to Snow becoming a mother when she enacts a dark curse removing all memories of those in Fairy Tale Land and taking the characters to a new realm. This new realm will separate Snow from both her true love and her child. Snow's only option to save her child is to place Emma in a magical wooden cabinet to transport her away from Fairy Tale Land before the curse hits. 28 years later, Emma, the savior, ultimately defeats the dark curse.

For Regina, the obstacle scene in her motherhood narrative occurs when Henry brings Emma to Storybrooke. When Emma arrives in Storybrooke, Regina realizes who she truly is - not only is Emma the savior, the only one who can break her dark curse, but she is also the birth mother of Henry, her adopted son. The following scene demonstrates this opposing force for Regina's sense of motherhood. The scene takes place before Regina even knows about Emma or her true identity. Emma serves as the threat to Regina's relationship with her adopted son, Henry.

Regina: I'm afraid, no, I'm...dreading...that Henry's birth mother will wake up one day full of regret over leaving him and come here and take him back...Yes, but I'm worried about something bigger than the laws at play. Fate. Destiny...But there's still someone out there who could destroy it.

Jiminy Cricket: Regina, if you keep worrying about the future, you'll never enjoy the present. This child has brought something to you – love - revel in that.

Revel in being a mother. (*Saving Henry*)

Regina had a fear of this obstacle to her motherhood when first adopting Henry. Emma's arrival brings that dread to fruition making Emma's return the obstacle function.

Within the theme of motherhood in Snow and Regina's narratives, *complication* scenes present hurdles to the characters. Emma's return breaks Regina's dark curse and reveals herself as Henry's birth mother. Another scene is when Regina has to undo her curse in Storybrooke in season three, which transports every character besides Emma and Henry back to Fairy Tale Land. In doing so, Storybrooke will cease to exist or to have ever existed. Henry will have no memories of Regina because Emma and Henry's memories will be erased in the undoing of the curse. This new course of action makes it impossible for Regina to see, to be recognized as or to act as Henry's mother once everyone returns to Fairy Tale Land. This scene destroys the chance

of Regina having an ability to mother Henry. Like all kernel scenes, such as the scenes just discussed, the overall story would not continue to move in a linear fashion without them.

Crisis scenes reveal uncertain outcomes, including Zelena taking Snow's newborn infant, Neal, in order to enact her own wicked curse. With Neal abducted, it remains uncertain if Snow will be able to save her child, or even to know his fate, much like the situation with Emma over 28 years earlier. Snow didn't know what happened to Emma when she was placed in the magical cabinet and was transported to another realm. Snow, once again, loses a child when someone enacts or attempts to enact a dark curse. Another crisis scene is when Henry takes a bite from a poisoned apple turnover Regina had intended for Emma. Henry, after taking a bite, becomes unconscious and is immediately taken to the hospital in Storybrooke.

Regina: Where's my son?!

Emma: (grabs Regina pulls her in another room, pushes her against a wall and pins her, yelling) The apple turnover you gave me. He ate it!

Regina: What? It was meant for you...because as long as you're alive, Henry will never be mine. (*A Land without Magic*)

Emma, as Henry's birth mother, is the main opposing force for Regina as a mother. After Henry takes a bite of the poisoned apple turnover, it remains uncertain what will happen to him, Regina, or Emma. At this point in the series, there is no magic in Storybrooke leaving a true love's kiss as the only way to save him.

An event following the scene just described is also a crisis scene. Emma saves Henry after he eats the poisoned apple turnover with true love's kiss (from a mother to son). Regina and Emma are the opposing forces and what remains uncertain is the fate of Regina.

Regina: Henry, no matter what you think or what anyone tells you, I do love you.

(A Land without Magic)

Regina says this line as she runs out of the hospital to save herself from the wrath of the townspeople that now know who they are after the curse is defeated. With Emma's kiss, both the sleeping curse afflicting Henry and the dark curse affecting the entire town of Storybrooke are broken.

The fluidity of evil, or the shift towards or from evil, in the characters is evident in several of scenes. Motherhood is another main contributor of the character's shift away from being considered evil or depicted as evil, much like True Love. This turning away from evil is evident in the scenes of Regina and Snow with their children. This transformation is clear in Regina's attempts to change, become less selfish, and no longer practice dark magic. All of Regina's actions are to prove she is not or no longer acts like the Evil Queen to her son Henry.

Regina rejects the archetypal character of the Evil Queen/stepmother as proven through her care and love for Henry. Snow contradicts the fairy tale mother archetype by actually having children. Becoming mothers demonstrates the characters' abilities to overcome their histories and their selfish motivations. Generally, the mothers of heroes, or in the case of *OUAT*, the savior, are rarely mentioned or alive in the written fairy tales. Another unusual aspect of motherhood and fairy tales, compared to the animated film and Grimm tale of *Snow White*, is that Snow and Charming have not one but two children!

Motherhood is revealed in the narratives and structure of the narratives of Snow and Regina and visually as well. Specific scenes demonstrate visual rhetoric in the show, which can be described through hair and makeup, costume, facial expressions, posture, body language, lighting and colors. All of the above visuals contribute to the identity of the character. The

As she is saying that, she realizes she can't let him go so she picks him up and says to the adoption agent,

Regina: Henry is my son. The best thing for Henry is to stay with a mother who will never let go of him ever again. (*Save Henry*)



Illustration 7.2 Regina and infant Henry, *Save Henry*



Illustration 7.3 Regina and Henry, *Save Henry*

Regina's posture is similar in both scenes above, even with eleven years' difference. The first scene is in Regina's vault, which houses her things from Fairy Tale Land while in Storybrooke. Easily noticed in the two scenes are the similar colors of their clothes and scene construction. Regina is wearing black and maroon clothing in both with Henry in the bottom scene wearing maroon. The backgrounds are varying shades of gray, which evokes a sense of familiarity for the two scenes between a mother and her son. Regina looks at Henry and maintains both eye and

physical contact when she speaks to him. He returns the eye contact, which may imply a level of comfort in their relationship.

In the top screen shot, Regina reveals her reasons for adopting Henry and her solution to keep her worries from preventing their happy ever after. The bottom scene is after Regina, Snow, Emma and others rescue Henry from Pan. Regina's voice and energy is soft and calm, as are her makeup and facial expressions. With the softer tone of voice, Regina soothes Henry by telling him a story. Lighting in both scenes is dim but reasonable due to the vault being underground and the captain's quarters being below the deck of a ship. Communicating how important Henry is to her, Regina tells Emma,

Regina: You have no idea what I feel. You have your parents; you have this person, a pirate who pines for you. You have everything yet you claim to know what I feel? All I have is Henry and I am not about to lose him because he is everything. (*Save Henry*)

Her maternal and protective instincts are expressed verbally and visually through her determination to save Henry from Pan and in her interactions with Henry. Regina takes Henry to her vault shortly after bringing him home to Storybrooke and tells him a story. The same nickname from her story to Henry is used eleven years later.

Regina: Once upon a time, there was a Queen and she cast a glorious **curse** that gave her everything she wanted. Or so she thought. She despaired when she learned that revenge was not enough. She was lonely. And so she searched the land for a little boy to be her prince. And then, she found him. And though they lived happily, it was not ever after. There was still an evil out there lurking...The Queen was worried for her prince's safety.

While she knew she could vanquish any threat to the boy, she also knew she couldn't raise him worrying. No, she needed to put her own troubles aside and put her child first. And so, the Queen procured an ancient potion of forgetting. (*Henry cries.*) Oh, it's all right. If the Queen drinks the potion, she won't forget her child. She'll only forget her worries. Her troubles. Her fears. And with those gone, she and her prince can indeed finally live happily ever after. (*Save Henry*)

While on the way to Storybrooke from NeverLand, Regina refers back to the story she first told him in her vault eleven years earlier saying, “we’ll be home soon my little prince” (*Save Henry*).



Illustration 7.4 Snow reuniting and remembering Emma, *Broken*

The scene above is after the curse is broken and all memories restored. Snow is able to realize who Emma truly is: Instead of her friend in Storybrooke, Emma is her long lost daughter. The light colors and sunny background demonstrate the mood and emotions of Snow finally reuniting with her daughter, Emma. Relief, happiness, and excitement are evident when Snow embraces Emma, finally back with the product of her and Charming's true love. Snow's happiness is restored, as well as her family.

While in NeverLand, Charming reveals he may not be able to leave the island due to consuming a magical plant. Snow will never abandon her true love and recognizes how precious time is with her family, especially her child after having all her memories restored from the dark curse.

Snow: I may be on this island for eternity so if you think I'm not going to spend my last moments with my daughter; you're crazy. (*Save Henry*)

Once Pan is defeated and Henry is saved, Charming is able to leave NeverLand prompting Snow to say, "we can go home, a family" (*Save Henry*).

Selflessness and altruism are commonly attributed to Motherhood, like True Love. Love is considered a weakness when a character is consumed with darkness, but as demonstrated with Emma and Regina's true love for Henry, maternal love is just as strong as the true love between adults. Sacrificing their life or happiness for their child's safety is common with both Regina and Snow. Regina, even while focused on her spite for Snow, is still able to care for and love Henry.

Regina: I want Henry to excel in life. That doesn't make me evil. (*Pilot*)

She is protective of him and will do everything she can to ensure he is safe. Regina, after recognizing herself in the fairy tale book he received from Snow, tells Henry,

Regina: I care because you think I am some Evil Queen...It hurts me Henry, I'm your mother. (*The Thing You Love Most*)

Regina is constantly trying to prove to Henry that she isn't out to hurt him or keep him from his birth mother once Emma decides to remain in Storybrooke,

Regina: I'm sorry, I know you think otherwise but I'm trying to protect you. This will be good for us. You'll see things will be better. (*The Thing You Love Most*)



Illustration 7.5 Regina and Henry, saying goodbye, *Going Home*

This scene is when Regina says goodbye to Henry before she will undo the dark curse trigger. They both realize that Henry will no longer have memories of her and it will be as if she never existed, despite raising, loving and caring for him over eleven years. Regina is shown wearing a white scarf, one of the few times she wears that color. Again, they maintain eye contact and Regina bends down to Henry's level when they speak. Regina, in order to save the town and undo the curse has to give up the thing she loves most because all magic comes with a price. She knew from the moment she held him; Henry is whom she loves most and losing Henry is the price she must pay for casting her dark curse. Making the greatest sacrifice and not thinking of herself, Regina transforms into a hero at this moment, more than any other time in the three seasons.

Henry: You're not a villain, you're my mom. (*Going Home*)

Regina is faced with yet another loss, perhaps the greatest loss of all - her little prince. Henry is her everything and although she knows she might never see him again or he might never know who she is, her sacrifice ensures he lives and is safe.

Cora, Regina's mother, did not embody nurturing or tenderness when parenting Regina. Cora protected Regina and wanted what was best for Regina, but only according to her own gain. As previously mentioned, Cora rips out Regina's true love's heart and crushes it, which kills him. It is later revealed that Cora does not keep her heart in her body, as she views love as weakness. Her motivation as a mother is power, and for her, power is greater than any magic. There are several instances where Regina's protection of Henry is more aligned to Cora's method of mothering, which also demonstrates the greater transformation of Regina as a mother. Regina is angry at being blamed for a crime she did not commit and loses care of Henry to Snow and Charming. She resorts to planning an extreme and evil way to get her son back. For Regina, there are times when being a mother, combined with her sense of protection of Henry, shifts her back toward evil.

Regina: I don't have any other choice as long as there are other people in our lives, you will never fully be mine. You loved me once, with them gone you can love me again, and see me for what I truly am, a hero.

Henry: Not if you kill everyone, you're a villain!

Regina: Me? They are the ones who've been keeping us apart; they are the villains. (*The Evil Queen*)

Once Regina gets magic back in season two, she goes to retrieve Henry. Henry leaves with her in order to save the rest of the townspeople from her revenge. Henry makes it clear he does not agree with Regina using magic to hold power. Regina traps Henry with a barrier spell at

their house, just as Cora did to her when she was younger. Regina realizes the way her mother treated her is not what she wants to do with Henry. She does not want to become her mother.

Regina: Henry, you are going to go home with David. I shouldn't have brought you here. I don't know how to love very well; I wasn't capable of it for a very long time... I remember that if you hold on to someone too hard, it doesn't make them love you. I'm sorry I lied to you and I made you feel like I didn't know who you are but I want you to be here because you want to be here, not because I forced you and not because of magic. I want to redeem myself. (*We are Both*)

Motives and actions of the characters are essential to understanding Motherhood, both in the contemporary and traditional notion, and to understanding how evil is communicated in the series. For Regina, her vengeful actions support her as the evil character, yet her motherly attention and affection for Henry contradicts that archetype. When Snow is with her children, she is perceived as nurturing and maternal by other characters. Her instincts of motherhood are never questioned, despite placing a newborn in a magical cabinet. The type of mother depicted in *OUAT* contrasts with the more contemporary notion of motherhood explored by Danuta Walters and Harrison (2014). The contemporary notion is described as “neither monster nor angel, this aberrant mom...does upend more traditional depictions of maternal identity. Unabashedly sexual, idiosyncratic to a fault, and seriously deleterious in her caretaking skills, she seems to live largely in the high end of popular culture” (p. 40).

As the narratives shift toward or away from evil, the characters are also shown transforming visually. With a focus on the theme of Motherhood, shifts away from evil are communicated through soft lighting, smiles, and lighter clothing. Motherhood is visually

communicated through facial expressions and physical contact. Motherhood introduces to the characters an altruistic and nurturing personality as well as a drive to protect their children. When Snow or Regina is selfless, as evidenced in Regina undoing her dark curse to save the town, they act accordingly in order to save their child(ren). Acts of selflessness transform Regina from the Evil Queen into a hero and a mother. Snow is determined to protect her family, especially her children, and will do anything to make sure they are safe, much like Regina with Henry. Any action to protect their children moves the characters away from evil. The exceptions are Regina's desperation and plan to undo the dark curse trigger taking only Henry with her and killing everyone else. While Regina does not follow through with those plans, she demonstrates a shift back towards becoming a villain.

What is most evident in the Motherhood narratives of Snow and Regina is that being nurturing, protective, and selfless fuels their identities as mothers. This notion of motherhood is more aligned with Hollywood portrayals of mothers as one of two binary opposites, either good or bad (Danuta Walters & Harrison, 2014). Snow and Regina continually prove to be *good* mothers to their children, despite any discrepancy in how they act or behave with other characters. This contrasts to some of the "highly ambiguous maternal figures" now featured on television shows, where mothers are not always good (Danuta Walters & Harrison, 2014, p. 46). Motherhood takes shape in several ways for Snow and Regina. Both times she becomes a mother, Regina does so by choice. After the death of Daniel, she chooses to marry King Leopold, thus becoming Snow's stepmother. Then Regina, by choice, becomes a single mother when she adopts Henry and becomes a stronger and selfless character. Snow is also a mother of two, Emma the savior and a newborn son named in honor of Neal, Henry's father. She, too, is a mother by choice.

Motherhood serves as a reason to abstain from committing evil acts. It serves as reason to try to be or to remain good. Motherhood affects Snow and Regina in similar ways. Both characters shift away from darkness not only visually but in their actions and narratives. Regina's narrative shows the greater transformation. Snow is a character commonly known to be nurturing, whether it be to dwarfs or animals like in the animated tale, or to an adult daughter and newborn son in *OUAT*.

The scenes analyzed support how characters' transformations from evil are communicated. The characters' reasons for and responsibilities towards motherhood are often strengthened when True Love or goodness prevails, especially for Regina. Motherhood is communicated when the characters are nurturing, protective, and altruistic, as well as through soft colors, soft vocal tones and maintained eye contact. Through a television series, the growth of certain characters occurs over time, which demonstrates several underlying layers of the character's change. Because of this, television continues "character development both on a regularly scheduled basis and over a long period of time" (Porter, et al., 2002, p. 24), where transformations are clear.

Motherhood, at the core of Snow White and Regina's narratives, is a matter of sacrifice. This is evident not only in actions and functions of scenes progressing the narratives along but visually through colors, costumes, makeup and interactions between characters.

Tinker Bell: I'm glad you got your son back, Regina. Seems the Evil Queen
was able to love someone after all.

Regina: Yes, it seems. It seems you were right.

Tinker Bell: I knew you had some good in you. (*Save Henry*)

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

By examining the narratives of Regina and Snow, this thesis demonstrates that in *Once Upon A Time*, evil is no longer portrayed as a character trait, but as a shifting aspect within the characters. The identifiable characteristics of evil are no longer restricted to only evil characters in the series. Evil transforms, evolves and consumes other characters, sometimes resulting in a once *evil* character becoming a hero. Revenge contributes to the character's shift toward evil while True Love and Motherhood help characters shift away from evil. This novel depiction of characters shifting toward and away from evil is important because television serves as an area for viewers to make sense of the world.

These findings demonstrate the importance of telling complex narratives, showing character development, and depicting the changeability of characters, much like how evil is communicated in *OUAT*. The textual analysis of how transformations of evil in characters are communicated through and by Regina and Snow contributes to the importance of examining the television meanings used by society to make sense of social experience. After all, fairy tales not only transport us to a different realm and lend to sense making but also signify hope.

Snow: I want him to have hope. Believing in the possibility of a happy ending is a powerful thing. (*Pilot*)

Limitations and Future Research

There were several limitations to this thesis research. Only two main characters were analyzed in the series *OUAT*. Another limitation to discussing how evil is communicated in the characters is that focus was on two female characters. *Snow White* is not the only well-known fairy tale in the series, although it is only one of two tales with consistent main characters in the

series. Multiple tales and characters are introduced and maintained during the series, but not every fairy tale character introduced becomes a main character.

Future studies should examine how evil is communicated in other main characters. Incorporating gender communication theories would provide an additional layer of depth to the analysis of narrative structure and visual rhetoric. Gold, in addition to being known as Rumplestiltskin, is also known as the beast from *Beauty and the Beast* and the crocodile from *Peter Pan*. Captain Hook is from the well-known tale of *Peter Pan* and could serve as a second male character to examine the communication of evil in comparison with Gold.

Additional studies might seek to examine the narratives and conduct rhetorical analysis of the visuals on the television series *Grimm*, which is also loosely based on the tales by the Grimm Brothers. I would also propose building on this research and compare the visual rhetoric of the transformations of evil in the different film and television adaptations of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Currently, there appears to be a cycle of adapting and revising well known fairy tales, evidenced with the soon to be released *The Huntsman: Winter's War* (Nicolas-Troyan, 2016), which touches on the back story of *Snow White's* Evil Queen. It would be pertinent to examine adaptations in order to understand more about why these fairy tales continue to not only remain profitable but relevant and popular in our culture.

Narrative complexity on television is based “on specific facets of storytelling that seem uniquely suited to the series structure that sets television apart from film and distinguish it from conventional modes of episodic and serial forms” (Mittell, 2006, p. 29). Narrative complexity as it appears in *OUAT*, including flashbacks and several storylines appearing in the same episode, is not novel to the television landscape, as evidenced in previous shows like *Lost* or *The Sopranos*. With an increase in shows telling rich, complex narratives over the course of a series, critical

analysis of the characters' narratives like the one presented in this thesis not only contributes to communication literature, it can also serve as a model for future research. The range of this form of complex storytelling on television presents more opportunities to criticize and analyze series pertaining not just to sense making but for other avenues like ethics in television as well. In addition to the narrative structure on television, our access to television series has increased with the technology available today, such as on-demand viewing or watching on hand-held devices. Television's complex narratives are available for consumption anywhere and at any time, which makes in-depth analysis of narratives critical.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

This study examined the transformations of evil in the primetime television series *OUAT*. The transformations of evil were revealed through Snow and Regina's narratives as well as through rhetorical analysis of the visuals on the series. Since humans are and always have been storytellers (Fisher, 1984), narratives and how they are shared will remain critical area to study to understand communication. Stories, including fairy tales, are what make us human (Wright, 2000; Fisher, 1985) and how we make sense of our lives (Fisher, 1985). Fairy tales are many of the stories we grew up hearing or watching. These tales are consistently told, retold and revised in order to remain in an ever-changing world (Cashdan, 1999; Zipes, 2002; Tatar, 2003). Through the adaptations on television or film, fairy tales continue to be popular and resonate in people's lives (Haase, 1993; Bottigheimer, 2009).

As previously mentioned, fairy tales are as relevant today as they were when originally told or recorded due to the common underlying dynamic of the struggle between good and evil that resonates across media (Cashdan, 1999). Narrative and language are main cultural processes shared by all societies and serve as basic ways of making sense of our experiences (Barthes, 1975; Fisher, 1984; Fiske, 1987). Narratives not only aid us in understanding our own experience but also help to understand the actions of others. We live out and understand our lives through narrative (Fisher, 1984). Using narratives in this way is not only helpful for real life but the same notion can be applied to the sense making involved when consuming media, including television shows.

Narratives on television, like other ways of telling stories, hold influence over the shaping or affirming of our beliefs. Television meanings are not limited to television and are

used within a culture to make sense of experiences (Fiske, 1985). Television consumers construct or shape their views based on the consistent bombardment of information presented through television. Television then serves as a source of societal and cultural values, ideologies, and perspectives (Gerbner, 1998; Norden, 2000; Goodall, 2012). With limited analysis on how evil functions in television narratives, this thesis contributes to the scholarship on evil as communicated both visually and through narrative in a television series.

Television serves as society's major storyteller due to being narrational in its mode (Gerbner, et al., 2002; Porter, et al., 2002), as well as being readily accessible, easily disseminated, and popularly consumed. This includes telling stories about good and evil. The fight against evil narrative is commonly shown as very clear-cut, with little doubt as to who is considered evil in television. This is where *OUAT* presents evil in a novel way. No character is evil or good all of the time. Evil evolves, consumes, and transforms characters. The study in this paper is important because *OUAT* depicts what was once considered an absolute in the written tales as a fluid area between good and evil in the characters, where it is much harder to disentangle the two.

Authors, including television producers, can influence how evil is to be or should be recognized. Evil has also been described as a social construct, and not something that is natural (Norden, 2000). What we recognize and understand as evil proves to be flexible and open to socialization. This research contributes to Turnau's (2004) notion of how "our understanding of evil is always enculturated, informed by and inscribed across of panoply of texts continuously in circulation around us" (p. 384), like television and stories.

Television and film creators have changed the face of evil constantly and "in doing so, they have turned evil into nothing short of a ubiquitous commodity for our consumption"

(Norden, 2000, p. 50). Through characters, evil is shown as many things, whether it is a vengeful Queen or a dark, powerful lord set to rid the world of light magic and goodness. Characters on television are not just representations of individual people but modes of sharing ideology and values (Fiske, 1987). Although Perrett (2002) describes evil as part of human nature, our recognition and understanding of evil is constructed by culture.

OUAT takes the tales we grew up hearing and changes them into stories that are new, layered, and complex. The characters, while still recognizable due to the repeated exposure to the genre, are not the characters we think we know. The Evil Queen from *Snow White* has a name, adopts a child, and becomes a hero. Snow not only rejects the written or animated versions of *Snow White* by engaging in an affair or murdering someone but also by having two children. *OUAT* takes the well known fairy tales and adds contradictions and complexities to the character's narratives not only to continually engage a television viewing audience week over week but also to demonstrate new ways of making sense of our experiences and the world by providing flawed and layered characters to relate to. The fluidity of evil in the series is unique because evil no longer a character trait, it is a developing and shifting aspect in the narratives of the characters and is revealed visually as well.

Before analyzing the characters' narratives in the series, a review of the relevant literature detailed scholarship on structuralism, narrative discourse, popular culture, fairy tales, and television/media studies. Through the review of applicable literature, it became evident the importance of continuing to examine not just narratives but to include rhetorical analysis of visuals to provide additional insight on the transformations toward and away from evil. This thesis looked to semiotics, the study of signs, in order to examine the visual portrayals of evil as shifting and fluid within and between the characters. Additionally, this research examined the

structure of the characters' narratives using Porter, et al.'s (2002) Scene Function Model, a model specific to television narratives.

Again, only episodes spanning seasons one through three (2011-2014) were analyzed. Several themes were uncovered in the examination of the characters, their narratives, and visual transformations. The themes identified and used in this thesis were Revenge, True Love, and Motherhood. For the rhetorical analysis of visuals in the series of *OUAT*, examination of the facial expressions of a character, the lighting, costume, and posture were of focus.

The Revenge theme is present in the structure and progression of Snow and Regina's narratives as well as when characters demonstrate selfishness or gain power. When there is power associated with the characters, there is more likely to be an instance or motivation for revenge. This theme of revenge and transformation of evil is also revealed visually. Revenge serves both as a reason for committing evil acts and motivation to inflict pain or suffering onto others as a result of something else. With a focus on the theme of revenge, evil is communicated through dark colors and clothing, as well as harsh makeup. In addition to costume and makeup, lighting is sharper or darker and interactions between characters are tense. This tension is visually communicated through facial expressions as well as posture.

Contrary to the well-known tale of *Snow White*, Regina's revenge has nothing to do with jealousy or vanity. In the written tale and animated film, the Evil Queen is determined to kill Snow White so she may remain the fairest one of all. Her motive is out of vanity and jealousy over a young child. The series *OUAT* rejects those reasons and provides an alternative over the course of the series, one being that Regina blames Snow for the death of her true love. Snow, on the other hand, often viewed as a good character, sought to avenge the death of a friend with murder. The thirst for revenge is at the core of both Snow and Regina's narratives. Both

characters react to loss by setting out to destroy the other's happiness or power. The nature of the revenge that they pursue is evident in the actions, especially in the kernel scenes.

The theme of True Love is evident in the narratives of Snow and Regina and also affects the transformations of evil in the series. Regina's happiness introduces the visual and narrative transformation from a villain towards a hero. Love proves to be most powerful in the narratives of Snow and Regina because love can threaten all dark magic since "love is the most powerful potion" (Gold, *Heart of Darkness*). In addition to True Love being present in the narratives, True Love demonstrates a shift away from evil visually as well. With a focus on True Love, transformations from evil are communicated through light colored clothes, soft features, steady eye contact, and smiles as well as the lighting being soft or bright. This softness is also communicated through facial expressions and vocal tone. Evident in the True Love narratives of Snow and Regina is that their motivations and actions are fueled by happiness.

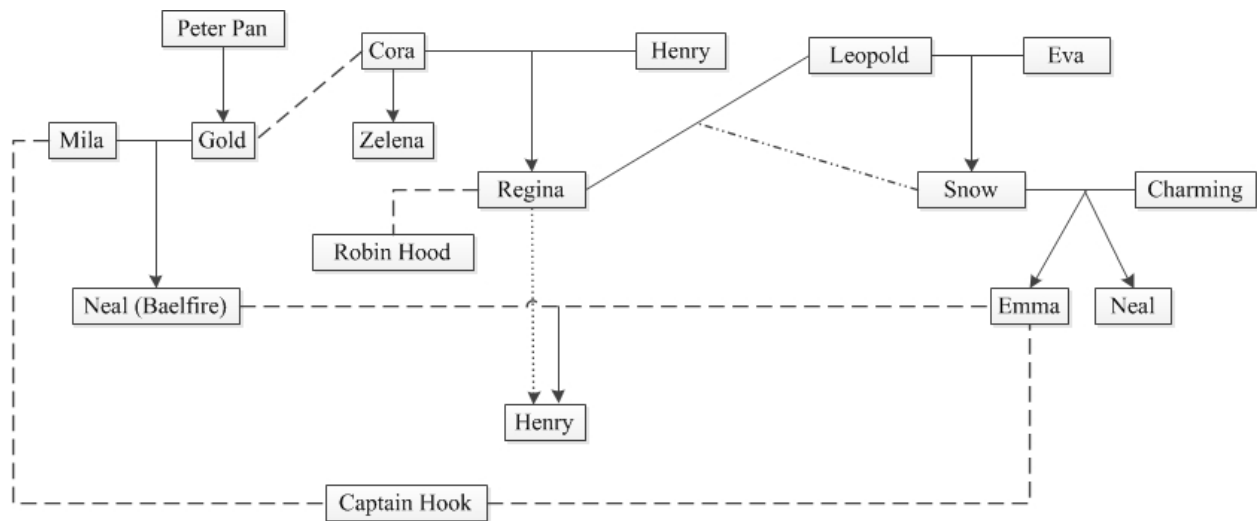
Motherhood introduces to the characters an altruistic and nurturing personality as well as a drive to protect their children. Acts of selflessness transform Regina from the Evil Queen into a hero and a mother. Any action to protect their children moves Snow and Regina farther away from evil. What is most evident in the Motherhood narratives of Snow and Regina is that being nurturing, protective, and selfless fuels their identities as mothers. Motherhood in regard to evil serves as a reason to abstain from committing evil acts and serves as reason to try to be or remain good. Both characters shift away from darkness not only visually but in their actions and narratives. Motherhood is communicated through nurture, protection, and altruism, as well as through soft colors, soft vocal tones and maintained eye contact. Motherhood, at the core of Snow White and Regina's narratives, is a matter of sacrifice.

The scenes and visuals analyzed support how transformations from evil are communicated as well as demonstrate the constant evolution of what is considered evil. Evil, or actions considered evil, occur as a circumstance to events in the character's narrative. This study is significant because of the influence television narratives have on culture and ways of making sense of the world. Repeated exposure contributes to how beliefs and perceptions are formed or influenced. Structurally, repeated exposure becomes a way of understanding or making sense of what is being told or shared (Bhatia, 2011). Being in love, being a parent, and holding onto revenge toward someone can be considered common social experiences.

These findings establish the importance of telling complex narratives, showing character development, and depicting the changeability of evil, much like how evil is communicated in *OUAT*. A close reading of Snow and Regina's narratives and rhetorical analysis of visuals in the show revealed how transformations of evil are communicated in the series and contributes to the importance of examining the meanings from stories and television and how they are used by society to make sense of social experience. Fairy tales not only transport us to a different realm and lend to sense making but also signify hope.

Keeping in mind the influence that stories and television have on an audience and society, television series like *OUAT* are able to bring to life well-known fairy tales by adding layers and complexity to the characters' narratives. Evil is communicated on *OUAT* as transformative, regardless of the character. Viewers can use those narratives in attempt to relate and find ways to deal with our ever-changing world. That's why, "these stories are classics. There's a reason we all know them. They're a way for us to deal with our world. A world that doesn't always make sense" (Snow, *Pilot*, 2011).

APPENDIX

Once Upon A Time Family Tree

Key:

—— Married

--- Romantic Relationship

..... Adopted child

-.-.-.- Step-child

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